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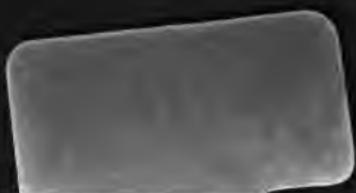
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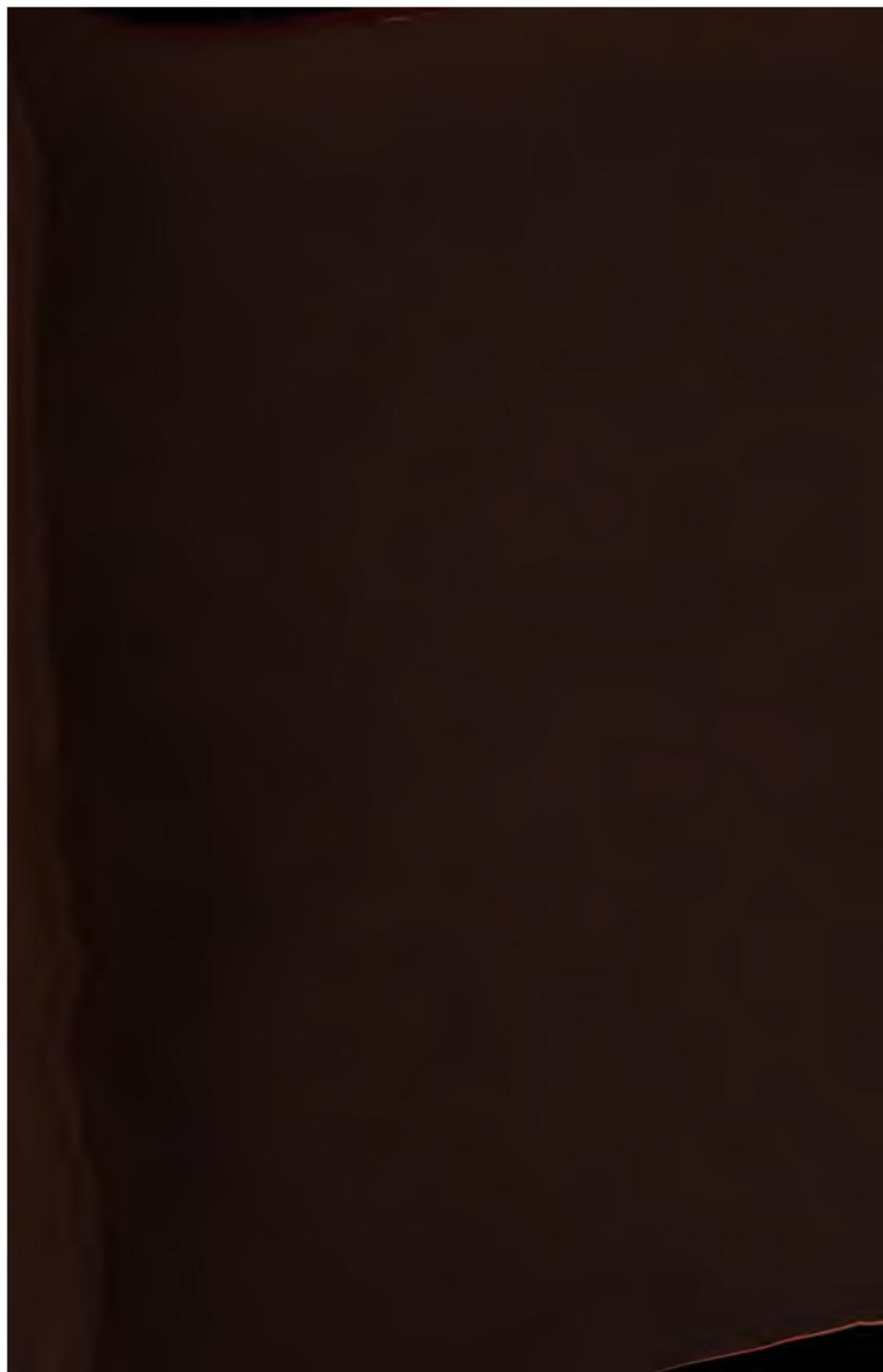
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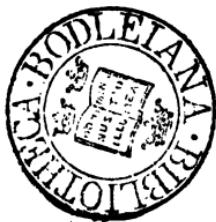
BRIEF MEDITATIONS

ON

THE COLLECTS.

BY

CATHERINE A. M. BROUGHAM.



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BRIEF MEDITATIONS ON THE COLLECTS.

ADVENT SUNDAY.

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility ; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

THIS noble prayer, while it breathes the deepest longings of the heart of Christ's Church, is also a compendium of Christian doctrine ; it briefly expresses the unity of the ever blessed Trinity ; the Incarnation ; the second coming in glory ; the judgment to come ; and the hope of everlasting life given to us in the Redeemer. It points to three contrasts ; the works of darkness and the

armour of light; His great humility and His glorious majesty; this mortal life and the life immortal.

‘The works of darkness’ include every act, word, and thought, that would fain hide itself from God; from God, holy and pure, and hating iniquity, as He is revealed in Scripture; though sometimes man in his presumptuous folly would call the all seeing eye to witness deeds which God abhors; ‘thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set in order the things that thou hast done.’ That is truly a work of darkness which shrinks from comparison with the written law, or which hides itself under false names and false appearances. In the Epistle, ‘let us put on the armour of light,’ seems synonymous with ‘put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ;’ ‘God is Light;’ and ‘God manifest in the flesh’ is ‘the Light of the world.’ God dwelleth in the Light that no man can approach unto; ‘Thou deckest Thyself with Light as with a garment;’ and in the brief vision of the glorified humanity on Mount Tabor, ‘His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the Light.’ The two ideas of Light and Love are the nearest approach we can make to expressing our conception of the Deity; and consequently we are told to ‘walk as children of Light,’ while Love is the essential mark of discipleship. ‘It is the very being of the soul to know God on whom it depends;’ to be penetrated

through and through with the Light of Life; but how is Light an armour? Inasmuch as the knowledge of God is the panoply of the soul against every form of evil; inasmuch as sin flies from holiness as darkness flies from light; inasmuch as purity is victorious over impurity, joy over woe, life over death. 'In Thy Light we shall see light;' in His Light we read the mysteries of Providence; in His Light we enter into the mysteries of grace. Light too, is a hiding place; it is a 'glorious privacy' to the eagle and the skylark, as they soar upward and vanish from our dazzled gaze; it is so to the 'lesser lights which rule the night,' as they disappear in the radiance of the rising sun; and thus is the Light of God, the Lord Jesus, our hiding-place and our shield; He now hides us in the secret of His presence from the strife of tongues; and one by one He withdraws His chosen ones, and they are hidden from our sight in His own brightness, like the stars by day.

In 'His great humility,' our Master wore the armour which He gives us to wear; He drew light from the Father of Lights; truth was revealed to Him; He increased in wisdom; He voluntarily made Himself a recipient of divine knowledge. That 'great humility' was that He might 'visit us' in a form we could comprehend, and become for us a receptacle of that purity and truth which our race had lost. That glorious majesty in which He will come to judge the

quick and the dead is for us also ; for He is still Immanuel, He still wears our nature glorified, He is still ‘the Man Christ Jesus.’

Let us ‘gird ourselves with light as with an armour,’ now in the time of this mortal life, unto the conflict which will then issue in victory ; let us begin the Christian year as heirs of the life immortal ; and find strength for the contest, and comfort for the suffering, in Him who liveth and reigneth ; ‘who ever liveth to make intercession for us.’

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning ; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE blessed Lord, who hears and answers prayer, also teaches us how to pray ; and He who gave us a revelation, must also teach us to read it aright ; He gives the object to behold, the light to make it visible, the eye to discern ; all things come of Him ; and He is alike ‘the Author and Finisher of our faith ;’ its Creator and its Object.

There is deep meaning in every word of this

prayer. The Lord '*has caused* all holy Scripture to be written ;' and all the research and reasoning of man will never arrive at a better definition of the nature of Inspiration ; the Church attempts no other : '*all* ;' every part ; even those historical records which do but lay claim to this world as God's world ; and those prophecies which belong to nations that no longer exist ; and those dark sayings which baffle and lay low the pride of intellect ; and those revelations of this world's future which have been to many generations an enigma ; '*all*' are for our learning.

'*Holy Scriptures* ;' those writings that stand apart from every human composition, preserved in the Jewish and the Christian Church, whose highest honour is that to her is committed the care and keeping of these sacred oracles. '*To be written* ;' not merely a revelation spoken for the generation then existing ; but written for those to come ; and in the study of Holy Scripture it is well to bear in mind the two distinct questions, 'Why was this spoken, or why did this happen ?' and 'Why was this written ?' Doubtless many an important event occurred, and many a precious word was spoken, of which we have no inspired record ; but '*these are written that ye might believe* ;' whatever He saw fit to cause to be written, belongs to His people in all ages. '*For our learning* ;' for the learning alike of the sage and the infant ; for, while the wisest of men learns day by day how much more he

needs to learn of the revealed mind of God, the very words of Holy Scripture are those which a babe first loves to hear: ‘For our *learning*;’ not as an exercise of our ingenuity, but for our instruction. God has given us in The Book a great gift; but His mercy does not end there; He becomes our teacher to explain His own word; and of Him who is the Father of Lights, of Him who has promised to send the Comforter to teach us; of Him who is that Guide into all truth, we pray that He will ‘*grant us*’ (every good thing, inward or outward, being His gift) to hear, to read, to mark, to learn, and inwardly digest, that holy word ‘in such wise’ that we may grow thereby: there are many ways of hearing and reading; so that our Lord says, ‘take heed *how*¹ ye hear,’ as well as ‘take heed *what*² ye hear,’ and we need God’s especial grace that we may do it aright. ‘*Hear*;’ both as read aloud and explained by our authorized teachers; for while, thanks be to God, the sacred volume is no longer chained to the reading-desk of the Church, yet the Scriptures there read to us seem to have a second and peculiar claim on our attention, inasmuch as one solemn part of the ordination of the pastors of the Anglican Church is this, ‘Take thou authority to read the Gospel in the Church of God.’ ‘*Read*;’ no hearing would supply the place of private study. ‘*Mark*;’ note, observe, distinguish, systematically and

¹ St. Luke, viii. 18.

² St. Mark, iv. 24.

carefully. ‘*Learn*;’ we never cease to be learners in this holy Book; the best teacher is still the humblest learner. ‘*And inwardly digest*;’ by meditation and prayer, turning to spiritual nourishment what we thus acquire; ‘as new-born babes desiring the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby;’ and, like Job, ‘esteeming the words of Thy mouth more than my necessary food;’ to bodily food it is fitly compared; for we cannot feed to-day to supply the necessities of to-morrow; each day brings its renewed necessity for renewed sustenance. We are not to be satisfied with gazing at, analyzing, even admiring; there is no spiritual nourishment in the indulgence of curiosity, even when that curiosity is engaged on the pages of revelation; to put in practice its requirements; to take hold on a promise, and say to God in real prayer, ‘Do as Thou hast said;’ to observe a precept, and deny self, and serve another, because it is so commanded; will draw more nourishment to the soul than years of intellectual study. We must ‘*inwardly digest*;’ we must hide it in the heart, and ponder it as Mary did the sayings of the Saviour; we must sow the seed in the prepared soil, that it may fructify. ‘That we by patience and comfort of Thy holy Word;’ a patient and persevering study, and a spirit so subdued as to need its consolations, prepare us to embrace and ever hold fast its blessed promises; it is not enough to ‘lay hold,’ however earnest our grasp

may be ; we must hold it fast, we must cling to it, and not let it slip ; and this hope, ‘this blessed hope of everlasting life,’ is as simply Thy gift, O blessed Lord ! as is the written record of it : Thou hast given it to us ‘*in* our Saviour Jesus Christ ;’ not as a thing apart from Him, which having once received is our own, but ever *in* Him, and only ours because treasured up in Him ; ‘your life is hid with Christ in God.’

There never was a period in the history of the Church in which there was such need of this prayer as the present, when there was so much unholy and irreverent study of the written Word. ‘The earlier theologians (and those too of recent times) have, perhaps, too little remembered that God has not spoken immediately, but through Peter, John, Paul, &c., in the Bible; at the present time we are certainly in danger of overlooking the unity of the Scripture while dwelling on the individual writings of Peter, John, Paul, &c. In short, the trees prevent our seeing the forest ; and we forget that it is not with a collection of separate writings that we have to do, but with the Bible as a whole ; as being the word which during the course of the world’s history, God wrote down for man’s salvation, and which contains nothing more indeed, but still nothing less, than is necessary to reveal the mystery of godliness. It is not so much from the individuality of the writers that we are to understand their writings, as from the relation of these

to the whole.¹ To accurately distinguish the human element from the divine, is not less difficult than to separate in ourselves between the mutual action and reaction of mind and body; our inability in either case to discern the limits is no proof that either element is inactive.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

O Lord Jesu Christ, who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THERE is no occasion on which we more rejoice in the united prayer of the Church, than on this day, when with one voice from all parts of the globe it ascends, asking for that grace which will return in showers of blessing. In its divine strength and its human weakness, its spiritual dignity and its earthly servitude, the Christian ministry stands, as it were, between heaven and earth; the channel in and through which God's

¹ Perthes.

mind is communicated, and His blessing bestowed ; and prayer for our Pastors, whether regarded as a duty or a privilege, ought to hold a place second only to the cry for mercy and forgiveness for our own souls. The Apostolic request, ‘Brethren, pray for us,’ comes down the stream of time with all the authority of their divine mission, and all the entreaty of their human frailty ; and it is pleasant to know that wherever the English Church exists, they are this day remembered before God in their twofold capacity, as stewards of His mysteries, and as ministers of our wants. The petition is made to ‘our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep,’ ‘the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls,’ in that character, as Head of the Church ; and it is one of three prayers in our Liturgy directed expressly to Him *through* whom all are presented to the Father.

The great object of the Advent is not lost sight of ; on the First Sunday we pray to be prepared by His first coming in great humility, for His second coming in glorious majesty ; on the Second, we pray to be taught the right use of that Revelation to which we are to take heed as to a light shining in a dark place, until the dawn of the everlasting day ; and now, we remember before Him that which is the connecting link between the accomplished work of redemption, and the yet future of judgment—the Gospel ministry ; of which the mission of John, with all its foreshadowings and results, was a type ; for

the cry, ‘Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,’ and, ‘Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,’ has been from the days of John the Baptist until now, the substance of the message that is to prepare the way before Him at His second as at His first Advent.

‘The ministers and stewards of His mysteries;’ perhaps here, as in some other cases, two parties divide the truth, each holding one half to the disparagement of the other; for, while Rome regards the priesthood only as connected with the mysteries of the faith, Protestants too often consider its chief office to be the teaching of the word; but our blessed Church, here as ever, holds the *via media*; not by weakening the value of the office, but by grasping both in the due proportion; praying for her ministers in both capacities, ‘that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth His true and lively word, and rightly and duly administer His holy Sacraments.’

We cannot sever the pastor and his flock; in blessing one the other must be blessed;¹ the golden oil pours through the golden pipes into the candlestick which holds up the light of the world; and in proportion as our ministers are filled with the Holy Spirit, shall we through them be taught; not with wisdom of words only, but with that power which we call influence; and in proportion as we are filled with the same Spirit, our prayer shall ascend for them, filling them

¹ Zechariah, iv.

with joy on our behalf: we pray for them that they may be faithful to rebuke and exhort, in order that we may be found an acceptable people. Blessed are the people who thus seek God's grace through the means of His own appointment; and blessed is the pastor to whom the flock are his greatest joy or his greatest grief; all whose deepest affections belong to them, simply because they are the people committed to his charge; and blessed are the people who see in their pastor the steward of God, to regulate His household, and the minister of God, to give them their portion of meat in due season.

Endue Thy ministers with righteousness,
And make Thy chosen people joyful.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

O Lord, raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of Thy Son our Lord, to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

THERE is something awful in this call for the manifestation of divine power; we are so dis-

posed to connect the idea of His power with its exhibitions in the earthquake, the tempest, the thunder-storm, and to forget that it is equally shown in the sunshine, the fruits of harvest, the resurrection life of spring-tide, that we are more ready to tremble before it than to invoke its presence. And as in the natural world, so in the spiritual; we seem to take refuge in His mercy from the terror of His power and great glory; but it is not so; if we hear of His mighty power in judgment, we hear far oftener of His power in blessing. It was a noble act of His power when He said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light;’ and a nobler still when He, who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in the heart. ‘The power of the Lord was present to heal;’ ‘Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, and He went about doing good;’ ‘He is the power of God unto salvation; Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God;’ yet though all terror be removed, and we shrink not from the mighty arm that is wielded by Love, yet we cannot, and ought not without a sense of awe, to utter the invocation, ‘Raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power, and come among us.’

We ask His mighty aid, not against the results, but against the source of all evil—sin; and against sin in the citadel of our own hearts; that sin which hinders our progress both by opposing barriers and by entangling our steps; and the daily pain of the struggle to press

onward, could scarcely be more vividly expressed than in the words '*sore let*, and *hindered*.' Even after we have earnestly entered on the race, and see that it is 'the race set before us,' it is too often like a path in which each step's advance requires the pruning, or the cutting down, or the uprooting, of some cherished plant; we have need to pray, 'Lord, save me from myself;' and His mighty power is exerted in the answer, 'God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' But the united prayer of the Church seeks a wider blessing; we ask Him to 'come in power and great glory,' to 'make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness;' with great might to succour those who are now following Him with doubtful and trembling steps; and speedily to help and deliver His people from all evil; we pray that His Kingdom may come, and His Will be done upon earth, as it is in Heaven. Even so, come Lord Jesus: and let Thy waiting Church join the triumphant song, 'We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned.'

CHRISTMAS DAY.

Almighty God, who hast given us Thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

COMMEMORATIVE signs, as the stones from the river Jordan, and the Feast of Tabernacles; and commemorative seasons, as the Sabbath, and the Passover—were appointed from the beginning to meet the tendency of the human mind to ‘let slip’ past events out of memory unless especially recalled; and to ‘let slip’ time itself, so that what appears equally suitable for any day seldom finds the day for its peculiar recollection; and the Christian Church, following the example of the Jewish Theocracy, makes each year in its course to bear a successive memorial of the events of our Redemption; to recall at stated periods the personal history of our Redeemer, from the day of His coming to visit us in great humility, ‘until the day in which He was taken up,’ and returned to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

In a higher and a holier sense we may apply

to the Christian year that which is so beautifully spoken of the natural seasons—

‘These as they roll, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God.’

We find that these religious commemorations were not merely to excite the feelings, as a domestic anniversary stirs the emotion of family love, but were to be used as historical records, for the instruction of successive generations: ‘That this may be a sign unto you; that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then shall ye answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord,’ &c. (*Joshua, iv.*) And again, ‘When your children shall ask you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover,’ &c. (*Exodus, xii.*) Thus too, the Christian festivals ought to be periods not only of thoughtful gladness, but of specific instruction concerning the facts and events of which they are memorials.

The fitness of mid-winter for the remembrance of that which brought life and immortality into a world that lay in the shadow of death, is so wrought into our British imagination, that we feel a strange want and disappointment in countries where Christmas comes dressed in sunshine and flowers; and this pleasant and harmless fancy often obscures the recollection that it is probably

the *real* birth-day ; the nativity of our Lord was so early and so constantly observed, that its commencement is lost in obscurity ; but St. Chrysostom traces back a tradition which fixes a very early observance, and probably the event itself, to the day on which we still keep the festival.

In this Collect the deepest mystery of our most holy faith is touched with that noble simplicity which accepts without questioning ; and which of every truth contemplates the side which God turns towards us illumined by revelation, contented not yet to see that which is turned heavenward, and so out of the reach of our perception. The Incarnation will for ever demand, and for ever remain above, the adoring investigation of created intelligence, among the secrets that belong unto the Lord ; but one view of it, the side turned to us, is plain, and is among the things which belong unto us and to our children. In the words of Hooker, ‘ The world’s salvation was, without the Incarnation, a thing impossible ; not simply impossible, but impossible it being presupposed that the Will of God was no otherwise to have it saved than by the death of His own Son.’ This is not to say what God could or could not have done, but what God declares He has done ; it was essential to our Lord’s atonement that He should be clothed in a body, and that this body should be the body of man. He not only became flesh, but our flesh ; ‘ forasmuch

as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same.' In the words of St. Anselm we may say, 'If God had made a new man who was not of Adam's race, he would not belong to that humanity which was born of Adam, and could not suitably satisfy for that nature to which he did not belong; for since it was right (that is, God's appointment) that man should satisfy for man's fault, therefore he who satisfied must either be the same with the sinner, or of the same race with him; and by the word of inspiration it is declared, 'He took on Him the seed of Abraham; wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.'

His generation, in which perfect holiness was united to human nature, in which the Eternal became 'God with us,' is the source of our regeneration, whereby He makes us partakers of the divine nature, and the creature becomes a man of God; because 'God was manifest in the flesh,' we may arise and live to Him, instead of lying as part of the inert mass of perishing mortality. 'The life was manifested,' and His people are made partakers of it. Manhood, with all its mysterious wealth of thought and feeling, has been chosen to be the temple of God; not by the independent exaltation of the inferior race, but by the entrance of the seed of the higher, bringing back the life of God into the soul of

man. Humanity is elevated by the fact that He took part of its flesh and blood ; and that portion of the human family which is brought spiritually near to Him by the connecting link of faith, is quickened and sanctified by the same Spirit that dwelt in His human body.

Into His mystical body, the Church, we are individually received in the Sacrament of Baptism; and so soon as consciousness awakes, we must abide in Him by faith, or fall from Him by unbelief: therefore we pray that we, being regenerated and made His children by adoption, may daily be renewed by the Holy Spirit; we pray, that because we are sons, God will send forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father; that having called us to the position and privilege of adoption, He will give us the heart and spirit of faithful children. This daily ‘renewing of the Holy Ghost,’ following ‘the washing of regeneration,’¹ is parallel to the lesson taught by the daily gathering of the manna, and the prayer, ‘Give us day by day our daily bread.’ We could no more lay up a store of divine grace, than we could lay up a store of life and breath; there must be the continual inhaling of His Spirit; the daily renewing of that repentance, whereby we renounce all trust in self, and that faith, whereby we confide our all to Him; and this personal and continuous renovation is ‘through the same Lord Jesus Christ;’ the

¹ Titus, iii.

same of whom we have been thinking as the Babe of Bethlehem, but who is now living and reigning with the Eternal Father, and with ‘the same Spirit,’ (the same whereby He became man, and we became Christians,) ‘ever one God;’ the first and the last; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; Jehovah; indivisible in eternity past and eternity to come.

ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

Grant, O Lord, that, in all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to Heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors, by the example of Thy first Martyr Saint Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to Thee, O blessed Jesus, who standest at the right hand of God to succour all those that suffer for Thee, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

THE eye delights to rest upon that face which was as the face of an angel; and in that martyrdom there is a blessed repose, a holy calm, to which we turn as to a quiet green spot in earth's care and toil; for while all around was wrath and tumult, he stood the emblem of Christ's own peace and joy; peace in tribulation, joy rising out of suffering. In him the cross and the

crown are united : we hear his calm bold words ; we feel the spirit and the power in which they were spoken ; we see that lovely countenance, so early pictured in our hearts, that it seems a treasure rather of memory than of imagination ; and we see the pelting of the pitiless storm that fell on that beautiful vision, not ‘as though some strange thing happened unto him,’ but as the expression of Satanic wrath against heavenly purity. He did not sink beneath it ; even then his look toward heaven was steadfast ; and without waiting till the torturers paused, or till the gentle form ceased to breathe and to suffer, he was permitted to attain all that we long for, for he ‘saw Him as He is ;’ and he became God’s messenger to tell the Church that her glorified Saviour is still ‘the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.’ He who was the first to lay down his life for Christ’s sake, was the first to proclaim that truth which is above all others precious to the sufferer, the human sympathy of the Redeemer ; and by that recorded word, ‘I see heaven opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God,’ the first martyr has in every age ‘comforted those who are cast down, with the comfort wherewith he was comforted of God.’

‘He heeded not reviling tones,
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
Though cursed and scorned and bruised with stones ;
But looking upward full of grace,
He prayed, and from a happy place
God’s glory smote him on the face.’

Crowned martyr! wearing the wreath of victory even in the conflict! While we gaze on him as we gaze on some bright distant star, it seems wonderful to be called to speak of ourselves in connection with him; yet so it is; in the unity of the body the meanest member is linked to the noblest, so that ‘if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.’ But what are ‘our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Christ’s truth?’ We must not invent them, or give to trifles the awful name of suffering or martyrdom; God knows how soon the fearful reality may burst upon us, to sift the wheat from the chaff. Meanwhile, let us imbibe the spirit of preparation for it, by enduring cheerfully whatever pain, or privation, or disappointment comes to us in the path of duty; by silently yielding our fondest wishes, even our most innocent inclinations, if their indulgence could bring reproach on the name whereby we are called; and above all, by cultivating such perfect forgiveness as will enable us to say without blasphemy, ‘Forgive us as we forgive.’ Forgiveness, arising from a sense of the forgiveness of Christ, extends from the outer world of wrong and cruelty, to the inner world of wounded sensibility, or grieved affection; we must leave off that ‘wrath with those we love, which works like madness in the brain;’ we must forgive the coldness of a friend, the inconstancy of a beloved

one, as fully as He forgives the coldness and fickleness of our hearts towards Him. We must learn ‘to love and to bless,’ not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth; to bless by returning good for evil; to bless by conveying the knowledge of God’s truth to others; and this spirit is to be sought as a gift from above, ‘that being filled with the Holy Ghost, we may learn to love and to bless.’

The example of St. Stephen is placed before us to teach us the firm testimony to the truth which God crowns with blessing; the steadfast look of faith up to heaven, whereby we may behold our Mediator and Advocate ere He is revealed to sight; forgiveness, shewing itself in love and blessing; and love and blessing finding their best expression in prayer: ‘Father, forgive them;’ ‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.’

‘And when he had said this he fell asleep.’ Asleep! how quiet, how gentle is this idea in contrast with the storm that raged around; asleep in Jesus, to whom he commended his parting spirit, even while the stones were still showered on his quivering frame; his last prayer was addressed to the ‘blessed Jesus who standeth at the right hand of God to succour all those that suffer for Him;’ and thus authorizes us not only to present our petitions through Him as our Mediator, but directly to Him, as our God and Saviour.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S DAY.

Merciful Lord, we beseech Thee to cast Thy bright beams of light upon Thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrine of Thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist Saint John, may so walk in the light of Thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IT was given to ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ to reveal the Redeemer as ‘the Light of the world;’ he alone was permitted to declare the essential nature of God: ‘God is Light,’ ‘God is Love;’ and both in his record of the Gospel history and in his Epistles there is a luminous transparency, as if through his human language we could look into the depth of that light which no man can approach unto.

‘Words, like nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within.’

So in his writings there are gleams from within the sanctuary, veiled in the words of simple narrative or of human converse; yet his was only a derived light, and we come to its source, and beseech the Lord Himself to cast *His* bright beams upon the Church, so that the doctrine taught by the Apostle of Light and Love may truly shine into it; that His servants may so walk in the communicated light of truth, that

they may at length attain the light of life ; where there is no need of the moon ; no derived light ; but ‘God Himself doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.’

If the biographies of the Apostles had all been completed, like that of St. Stephen, within the infallible record of Scripture, they would seem to be enshrined in crystal, through which we could gaze, but in which they were parted from common life ; but the Lord prolonged the threads of their lives, and wove them into the web of the Church’s history, thus preserving the unity, and connecting the Christians of the New Testament with the Christians who followed them, as one brotherhood ; the events of their after lives stand on the same level with other historical records of the early Church, to be judged according to evidence, and as fit subjects for critical research. The longest of these golden threads is the life of St. John, prolonged for seventy years after his Master had been taken away from him into Heaven ; and from history, no more and no less trust-worthy than other records of the time, we learn that fifteen of those years were spent in Judea, in meek duty fulfilling the parting charge, ‘Behold thy mother,’ until Mary departed to be with God her Saviour ; and not till this home duty was accomplished, did John commence the wide missionary labours in Asia Minor, which brought him under the condemnation of the Emperor Domitian. He was a martyr in will, but not

in deed ; for it pleased God to bring him unhurt out of a caldron of boiling oil, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from the furnace, and to give him the farther trial of lonely exile, and the experience of weakness and old age. After leaving Patmos, he took charge of the Church of Ephesus ; Timothy, its Bishop, having suffered martyrdom. During his ministry, he found that a youth who had received the word gladly, had in time of temptation fallen away, and had become leader of a band of robbers. John followed him to the mountains, threw himself in the way of the banditti, and desired to be led to their captain, who in shame fled at his approach ; but he cried, ‘My son, why fiest thou from thy father, unarmed and old ? there is yet hope of salvation ; believe me Christ has sent me ;’ and he left him not till the poor wandering sheep returned with him to the Good Shepherd. We all remember the brief sermon of his extreme old age, ‘Little children, love one another,’ and his apology for its frequent repetition, ‘This is what our Lord commanded, and if we can do this we need do nothing else.’ Irenæus and others affirm that his Gospel, supplemental to the other three, was written at Ephesus, at the earnest entreaty of the Asian Bishops and ambassadors from other Churches ; and that he solemnized a general fast, to seek God’s blessing previous to commencing the work.

His mighty eloquence procured him the title

of ‘the son of thunder,’ which to Hebrew ears conveyed the idea of the offspring of the Voice of Jehovah; and his sublime fearlessness, ever soaring upward, and plunging deeper and deeper in light, and ever seeking the highest, led his followers to compare him to the eagle, gazing undazzled at the sun: but his noblest appellation was this, ‘*the disciple whom Jesus loved*;’ and in that blessed expression a benediction is pronounced, a holy sanction bestowed on personal and distinctive friendship, like that which is given to family affection by the Redeemer’s filial tenderness, and to sorrow by the Redeemer’s tears.

‘Dieu nous a aimés; c'est toute la doctrine de l'évangile, aimons Dieu; c'en est toute la morale.’¹ Such was the teaching of the blessed Apostle St. John; his life and doctrine harmonize like the light and the alabaster vase which contains it. He ever walked in the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness: and his light so shined before men that they took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus.

¹ Adolphe Monod.

THE INNOCENTS' DAY.

O Almighty God, who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest infants to glorify Thee by their deaths; Mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by Thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith even unto death, we may glorify Thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IT is fit that Infancy should have a day of especial notice connected with the birth and infancy of the world's Redeemer; and the unconscious martyrs of Bethlehem have their place in the Christian year next to him who stands as the noblest type of manly purity. They were passive martyrs, yet we cannot doubt that among the little ones whose angels always behold the face of the Father in Heaven, these babes who unconsciously yielded their sweet lives that the infant Saviour's might be spared, will have a memorial before God; we may be sure the fact is not forgotten.

The passiveness of infancy seems to be the characteristic into which all who enter the Kingdom must return: ' Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven;' the spirit

of a little child implies a submissive reception of what God gives, and an emptiness of that self assertion whose root is pride. The infant is emphatically a recipient; this is what is shewn in infant baptism, where there is not even the hand of faith to grasp the gift bestowed; and it was shewn in the crown of martyrdom which these simple creatures received unconsciously, while St. John waited for it in vain, though rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's sake; the crown to which St. Peter attained after a life of conflict; and for which the noble Paul was 'ready to be offered.' They stand conspicuously then, as the great safeguard of the Church, against the worship of either faith or obedience as a meritorious act, for they believed nothing and they did nothing, and God blessed them; they show that He bestows His gifts where and on whom He will; and that it is ours simply to accept; that faith is really an empty hand; the instrument or medium truly through which every gift is received by the conscious soul, but of which His abounding grace is perfectly independent. But having become as a little child in the reception of what God does, and of what God says, and of what God gives, the Christian enters on a conflict of which infancy is happily unconscious; he must pray that all that is in him contrary to God may be crucified; 'what is Thine in me acknowledge; what is mine take away; 'mortify and kill all vices in us;

and so strengthen us who have fallen far from Thee, that by the innocency of our lives and constancy of our faith even unto death, we in the battle of life and the sore combat of the conflicting will, may glorify Thy Name, even as babes and sucklings have glorified Thee in life and in death by their passive acquiescence and submission !

‘The harp of heaven
Had lacked its least, but not its meanest string,
Had children not been taught to play upon it:’

and a dying infant touches some chords which its life could not have sounded. A creature with the germ of immortality, brought into the world by suffering, longed for and beloved, just to breathe and to die, surely speaks in unmistakeable language of a life beyond death. Again, human death is the wages of sin; and in the penalty endured by the guiltless babe, we read the awful lesson that ‘by the transgression of one many were made sinners;’ that in Adam all die, his whole race included in himself. And the certainty that this creature who has done neither good nor evil is an heir of death, and also an heir of resurrection life, speaks of a righteousness not belonging to that race, but wrought for it by another; that ‘as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’

‘What purer, brighter sight on earth than when
The sun looks down upon a drop of dew,
Hid in some nook from all but angel’s ken,
And with his radiance bathes it through and through:

Then into realms, too clear for our dim view,
Exhales and draws it with absorbing love.
And what if Heaven therein give token true
Of grace that new-born dying infants prove,
Just touched with Jesu's love, then lost in joys above.'

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.

Almighty God, who madest Thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit; that, our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed Will; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE fact of the Circumcision, though it does not explain, throws a holy light over the mystery of infant suffering. We cannot guess whether in any measure, or in what way the pains of infancy can yield those peaceable fruits of righteousness which reconcile us to the chastening of those who are visibly exercised thereby; we know not whether the babe, even in his unconsciousness, may be made a partaker of His sufferings, that 'as it suffers it may also reign with Him'; or whether through suffering, the grace of patience may be stamped upon his passive soul; there is an unsearchable mystery in pain; we cannot understand it in any case, and least of all in this;

but we do know as a fact that bodily pain was inflicted on the Son of God when He had worn human nature only eight days as the Babe of Bethlehem ; and we are thus assured that whether our infants can in any sense know the fellowship of His sufferings or not, He does by experience know the fellowship of theirs. How often the mother laments that she alone has sympathy with her baby ; that even the strong man, to whom it is as near and dear as to herself, cannot feel as she does for its helpless wailing ; but He who ‘is not ashamed to call us brethren,’ became an infant of days ; He remembers that He was once a little child, (for to Him nothing is lost in the distant past,) and in that memory He possesses a power of sympathy beyond the mother, for she has forgotten the sorrows of her own infancy. In that distress, almost intolerable to the nursing mother, of witnessing pain that she cannot relieve, and which the little sufferer cannot explain ; when she cries almost in despair, ‘If I could only understand what it is ; if he could only tell me what he suffers ;’ she may remember that there is One in existence whose blood was shed at eight days old, and who pities her babe as one that knows its sorrows, while He, reading the end from the beginning, sees that its suffering is not in vain ; and she may lift her heart in full confidence to Him for her babe as well as for herself.

He came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil ;

and its first requirement was a recognition of that mysterious declaration, ‘without shedding of blood there is no remission.’ But the Church stays not her worship to examine the doctrine or the fact as a matter of speculation; she goes on at once to seek its spiritual benefits, and prays that we may ‘in like manner always obey God’s blessed Will,’ by a passive surrender of ourselves into His hands, for whatever discipline He sees fit. ‘Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit; (an awful gift!) that our hearts and all our members may be mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts.’ He who hears this prayer—‘the Lord who made us this soul,’ and is acquainted with all its complex machinery—alone can know what a sacrifice it may involve, what a life-long crucifixion it may demand, to bring the pride and the vanity of our nature, its ambition, its thirst for power, its love of pleasure, its intense longing for a joy and a sympathy deeper and fuller than we are intended to have on earth; the idolatry of the creature; to bring them all—yes, *all*—into subjection to His Will, so that ‘our very self shall be no more our own;’ and yet His is a ‘blessed Will,’ and we say Amen.

THE EPIPHANY.

O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles ; Mercifully grant, that we, which know Thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE Feast of the Epiphany comes last in order of those which may be called the Christmas Festivals. The first historical notice of it is found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria ; and in the time of St. Chrysostom it is spoken of as an old and established festival of the Eastern Churches ; the earliest distinct trace of it in the West is found in Gaul about the middle of the fourth century.¹

In this Collect, the faith whereby we now know our Saviour is compared to the luminous vision which led the wise men to Bethlehem, contrasted with the future full and perfect enjoyment of His presence, as represented by the sun-rise which gives light to all. It is thought by some that this luminous body was the same light which the Shepherds beheld by night, when the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid ; by others, that it was a star which the Magi observing in a peculiar position, regarded

¹ Proctor on the Common Prayer.

as an omen of some distinguished birth; the appearance of such a star, and the journey of the wise men, is mentioned by Chalcidius the Platonist. The Lord Himself adopts the emblem of the star which they saw in the east; ‘I am the bright and morning star;’ and this emblem was before the prophetic eye of Balaam, when he said ‘There shall come a star out of Jacob;’ but it is probable that to the wise men was revealed some further intimation, which led them to follow its guidance until it came and stood over where the young Child was. We need not be curious, still less sceptical, concerning the nature of this luminous appearance, when we remember how frequently light, visible to the eye, accompanied the Divine Presence: as in the vision of Abraham; in the Urim and Thummim at the dedication of the Temple; and at the conversion of St. Paul; the star-like vision was only an additional instance of this manifestation; and doubtless He who gave the sign enabled the wise men rightly to interpret it.

‘We know Thee now by faith;’ we believe that there exists what eye hath not seen, nor can man’s heart conceive; that there is an unseen world, of which Thou, O Lord Christ, art the Sun and Centre; and this mental perception which ‘seeth that which is invisible,’ is strengthened as one by one of those with whom we have walked toward the house of God in company pass out of our sight, and enter within the veil, and become numbered among the things not seen, yet beloved;

we know that they are ‘*now, after this life,*’ enjoying the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead. The fruition of Thy glorious Godhead ! oh, wonderful words ; the richest, the most sublime ever uttered by human voice ; suggesting a depth of radiance into which we may gaze, but cannot penetrate ; a privacy of glorious light, too dazzling to be distinctly seen. Each year the wonder of this expression, (all the more wonderful because it is not borrowed from the inspired Book) seems to increase in depth and fullness. We do not know what is meant by ‘the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead ;’ we feel it, we seem to grasp the thought, but we cannot define it ; it is too high and too pure for our touch ; we cannot comprehend, but we may bathe our souls in the thought. Thou art Thyself the central blessedness ; it is not only that all bliss emanates from Thee, ‘the only Source and Giver of all good ;’ but that Thou art Thyself the blessedness round which Thy own gifts circle. Thy presence is fullness of joy ; the pleasures which are at Thy right hand for evermore derive their glory from Thy presence. Thought fails in the contemplation, but the heart’s love would ‘track Thee up th’ abyss of light ;’ and feeling what it would have been to cling like Mary to the Cross, and to be recognized even in that hour of anguish, we may gain a faint conception of what it will be to behold the King in His beauty, to see Him surrounded by the glory which He once left for

our sake ; and there to find ourselves remembered still ; there in that awful purity, that radiant peace, that consuming brightness, to hear the voice of Jesus speak audibly, as now it often whispers in our hearts, ‘It is I; be not afraid ; I know that ye seek Jesus Who was crucified ;’ and there to recognize in that High and Lofty One inhabiting Eternity, the same Redeemer to Whom in our sin and misery we now draw nearer than we could draw to the dearest of earthly friends ; in Whose holy sympathy is treasured up all our store of secret joy or sorrow, of memory and of hope, that has never been spoken to human ear—to see Him as He is ! But this does not reach it ; there is a depth beyond this in the words addressed to the Eternal Father, ‘The fruition of Thy glorious Godhead ;’ ‘*we cannot see for the glory of that light.*’ Those of us who during this new year shall enter into His rest, will understand what is spoken in the congregations when next Epiphany comes round, as many now understand it who worshipped with us last year ; meanwhile we must be content ‘to know in part.’

The voice of our Mother Church sweetly dispels the dark dream that would overshadow our passage out of this world with gloomy anticipations of an unconsciousness amounting to a temporary annihilation, between death and resurrection ; she acknowledges no ‘dark day of nothingness’ succeeding ‘the last of languor and distress ;’ she declares, that after this life they

have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead ; that with God do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord ; and that with Him the souls of the faithful after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh are in joy and felicity ; that with Him do live the spirits of just men made perfect, after they are delivered from their earthly prisons. She raises her protest alike against the purgatory of Romanism, and the annihilation of modern teaching ; and echoes the voice of the Master when He said, ‘To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise ;’ and of the Apostle’s assurance, ‘To die is gain.’

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people which call upon Thee ; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHRISTIAN men less frequently fail by neglecting known and recognized duty, than by taking a false or narrow view of what duty is. It is quite possible to be self-satisfied and to escape all reproaches of conscience by limiting our conception of duty to the measure of our own convenience ; but the true idea of Christian life

is that of ever enlarging circles of loving service, each widening according to the perfecting of that within it. There is great danger in a disproportion between the theory and the practice; on the one side we must not lower the idea of what ought to be done, to the standard of what we do; while, on the other, we must beware of satisfying ourselves with such wide and grand views of beneficence as we cannot realize, and therefore do not attempt. That which is truly 'beyond our measure,' however good, is not *our* duty; and it is a valuable though painful discipline to a proud and energetic nature to be shewn how very narrow that measure sometimes is; in bodily weakness or in poverty, we often struggle against the chain, and call our impatience a fervent desire to labour for Christ; but we can never labour for Him except in the way of His own appointment; all other activity is only fleshly excitement. We must not thrust another aside, in order, as we suppose, the better to fill his place; we must

'Learn that each duty makes its claim
Upon one soul, not each on all.
How, if God speaks thy brother's name,
Dare thou make answer to the call?'

We must not seek a wide field of usefulness to the neglect of home and personal duty. But, on the other hand, much may be possible for us, and is consequently our duty to do, from which we turn aside in selfish indolence, and call our indolence

humility or submission. It is then a wise and needful prayer which the Church teaches us to offer at the beginning of a new year, ‘Grant that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do.’

To ‘perceive’ implies a quickness of discernment; ‘a quick understanding (or scent) in the fear of The Lord;’¹ to ‘know’ implies a clear recognition of the path of duty; ‘thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left;’² but it would be an awful gift to have the conscience thus enlightened, and then to be left to our own strength. Just in proportion as we honestly ‘perceive and know what things we ought to do,’ we shall feel our need of ‘grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same;’ grace to will, and power to do; a willing heart, a firm foot, and a skilful hand, to accomplish those works which God appoints for us. It is not enough to have a sign-post to point out the right way; we need a living Friend to lead us into the road, and then to uphold our goings in His paths that our footsteps slip not.

Nothing is more painful than uncertainty respecting the line of duty; and when we have gone so far in doubtful ways as to be thoroughly perplexed by conflicting claims, it is too late to disentangle the clue without injury to someone; the very alteration of the course may hurt both

¹ Isaiah, xi. 8. (margin.)

² Isaiah, xxx. 21.

ourselves and others, though never to have begun it would have hurt none. Therefore, to perceive it beforehand, a quickness in discerning, a steadfastness in knowing the right way, is to be sought as a blessing by each one for himself, and for all with whom he comes in contact ; and it is a blessing, or gift, to be sought daily. It seems in the record of past times that there was more possibility of laying out plans, and making rules and adhering to them, than there is in the present state of society ; fewer interruptions and unexpected variations of circumstance ; but to us in a peculiar degree, each day's claims come fresh and separate ; and each day brings some case of doubtful duty, in the expenditure of time, or money, or words, or influence, with its especial need of guidance and support.

' Having a true estimate of ourselves, we shall not vainly attempt anything above our reach, nor disdainfully neglect anything that is within the compass of our calling, which are the two evils so common among men. It is a strange blindness that they who do grossly miscarry in the duties of their own station, yet so readily fancy themselves capable of something higher, or think themselves wronged if it be refused them. The low esteem of self doth not take away the simple knowledge of what gifts and graces God hath bestowed on a man, for that were to make him unthankful and unuseful.'¹

¹ Archbishop Leighton.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Almighty and everlasting God, Who dost govern all things in heaven and earth; Mercifully hear the supplications of Thy people, and grant us Thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE mighty King Hezekiah, when restored almost by miracle, and when by miracle assured that his prayer was heard, regarded as a sufficient answer the promise that there should be peace during his lifetime: and in each generation the petition goes up, ‘Give peace in our time, O Lord!’ Such wars as we have known in late years enable us to appreciate the blessing of national peace, to which we had long become so accustomed that we forgot it could ever be disturbed; but now we are reminded by the sufferings of others, how great and how tender is the mercy by which we are still encircled in our island homes. In our prayer, however, we ask for a deeper and more abiding gift, ‘*Thy peace;*’ that peace of the Lord Jesus which can exist in the midst of outward violence; which was experienced by many in the battle-fields of the Crimea and the fortresses of India; His peace, which can subdue the madness of the people, and say to the winds and waters, ‘Be still.’ It is remarkable how large a place the idea of Peace occupies, and

how often in various applications the word occurs in Holy Scripture, compared with its small account in human schemes of felicity. Peace is generally esteemed as a cold and dim anticipation, a sort of ‘twilight grey,’ a state in which there is rather resignation than happiness; as though excitement were a necessary ingredient of bliss. This is partly because its presence is so noiseless; it lies about us like the quiet of the summer air, and we are only conscious of it when it is disturbed; but undoubtedly, even in its external sense, Peace is not duly valued; even Christian people do not ‘seek peace and ensue it;’ they do not, ‘as much as in them lies, live peaceably with all men;’ they do not ‘study to be quiet;’ the gratification of self defence, the pleasure of uttering a retort or repartee, the love of argument for its own sake, the pride of overthrowing the opinion of another and maintaining one’s own, the desire to prove oneself in the right even in the smallest matters, are preferred to Peace; it ought not so to be. Peace in all its significations and applications, was the Saviour’s dying bequest; ‘Peace I leave with you.’ Internal Peace, in its full meaning, is that equilibrium of the whole moral being which leaves every power free to enjoy a holy liberty; a liberty redeemed from fear; a liberty that moves within the circle of Divine Love; it is that calmness of the soul in which the image of God is reflected, as the moon is in still water; it is not the ice-bound stream catching a glittering

ray, but the deep calm lake receiving into its bosom and giving back the image of the heaven above it. Some would paint joy as a streak of dazzling brightness breaking athwart the cloud; it is not so; peace is the calm blue sky in which the sunshine of joy is sparkling. Peace is emphatically God's own gift, and is to the Christian a citadel of strength 'keeping his heart and mind,'¹ while the enemy rages outside.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth Thy right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

To the Almighty and Everlasting we appeal, beseeching Him to look in mercy on our infirmities, as distinguished, perhaps, from our sins; for besides our woeful need of pardoning grace as sinners, we have deep need of condescending mercy and pity as weak and helpless creatures. Both are found in the loving heart of our Saviour; 'He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are but dust;'² and in all our dangers and necessities the power of the Lord is present to heal even now, as when to the poor leper He put

¹ Philippians, iv. 7.

² Psalm ciii. 14.

forth His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I will, be thou clean ;’ ‘His hand is stretched out still,’ not in judgment but in compassion ; and His mighty power is shown in stretching forth His hand to heal.

We are surrounded by dangers which we see not and necessities which we feel not ; our dangers are hidden from us by the unceasing care which guards us day and night ; and our necessities are concealed by the unfailing regularity of the supply ; so that we rarely remember to ‘thank Him for our preservation ;’ and it is well that apparent trifles are sometimes permitted to show that they *are* dangers, and that the great events of our lives are made to hinge on the insignificant, in order to teach us the lesson of constant dependence.

We lose half our trust if we apply this prayer only to what we consider our spiritual dangers and necessities, the concerns of the soul : for soul, body, and spirit ; for this day’s walk through the world as well as for eternity ; for daily food, for suitable raiment, for domestic comfort, as well as for spiritual sustenance ; for the kindly intercourse of friendship to-day, as well as for the society of saints and angels in glory, we must seek the supply of all our need from The Giver of every good gift ; and it is in thus exercising a constant sense of dependence and trust, in thus mingling the thought of God with every circumstance of life, that we shall maintain a close and real inter-

course with Him, and learn indeed that He is a God at hand, and not a God afar off.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

O God, Who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EVERYONE thinks it is an awful thing to die; but truly it is an awful thing to live; none the less awful because we are blind to the worst of the many and great dangers which surround us. We are *set* in the midst of them; not by choice; not by chance; we are here, as a matter of actual fact, surrounded by dangers as ‘great’ as those which beset our first parents when ‘the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety,’¹ by snares which may entangle our steps and cast us down to perdition, by an enemy who seeks our destruction like a lion roaring after his prey; and by manifold evils arising from the state into which sin has thrown human society. The dangers are ‘many;’ we are ever ready to fancy that the opposite of wrong is right, that the opposite of falsehood must be

¹ 2 Corinthians, xi. 3.

truth ; and so we are in danger on either side of the narrow way that leadeth unto life ; for in escaping from one snare we rush into another. The dangers are ‘great ;’ involving our eternal safety, involving every individual every day in the possibility of a fall as great as that whereby sin first entered into the world, and death by sin. Blessed is he who takes refuge from himself in God ; who instead of trying to dissemble and cloak his faults appeals to God’s Omniscience to search them out ; ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting ;’ ‘Thou knowest us to be set in so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright.’ This frailty of our nature is not offered as an excuse, but is brought before God as the disease to be healed ; our acts of sin do not begin and end in themselves, but are symptoms of the radical evil of our nature, which is so frail that we *cannot* always stand upright ; that we need pardoning mercy and sustaining grace at every step ; and therefore we beseech Him to grant us such strength as may support us *in* all dangers, and such protection as may *carry us through* all temptations. We are not to linger in the ways of temptation, however pleasant ; it is a mockery to offer this prayer unless we really wish to be carried out of it ; and how carried ? even as was asked for us at our baptism,

'embraced in the arms of His mercy,' and so borne through the waves of this troublesome world, whether of temptation or of sorrow.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Church and household continually in Thy true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of Thy heavenly grace may evermore be defended by Thy mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE Christian Church is not a voluntary association, but a family, in which we have certain relationships, and their consequent privileges and duties as a birthright; we may neglect them and turn our privileges to our condemnation, but we cannot get rid of them as though they had never been; to the Christian, as to the Israelite, it is declared, 'That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the earth, to serve wood and stone.'¹ It is an awful thought that without any choice of our own, we are born or adopted into a family, in which we owe to One Father the love of children; into a kingdom in which we owe to One Sovereign the allegiance and fidelity of subjects; into a household in which we owe to

¹ Ezekiel, xx. 32.

One Master the obedience of servants ; that we are placed under certain regulations, to which we owe adherence ; but it is an awe full of blessedness, like that with which we awaken to the consciousness that we are created immortal ! God did not wait for our consent to bring us within the fold ; ‘Ye have not chosen Me,’ says the Saviour, ‘but I have chosen you ;’ and it is *there*, ‘in the place of children,’ that He says to each individually, ‘My son, give Me thine heart.’

In this His household, there are, alas ! faithless children, rebellious subjects, disobedient servants, all the more guilty because of their high calling to be His loving sons, His loyal subjects, His willing servants : and not anyone can look into his own heart and say that he fulfils any of these relations toward God as he ought to do. Therefore, each one for himself, and each for all, and all for each, let us pray that the Church and Household of Christ may be kept ‘continually in His true religion ;’ for false religion abounds almost as much as total carelessness ; and let us lean—‘with force of very helplessness’—upon His heavenly grace, as that which alone can enable us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech Thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that, when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THE Church in all her creeds and prayers recognizes the existence of evil in man as a fact she doubts not; and the power of Satan and his personal influence are considered as a reality to be guarded against, not as a theory to be argued. It were well if her children were actuated by the same wise and humble spirit, and instead of doubting and investigating *why* such things are permitted, or *how* they come to pass, would accept the existing state in which we find ourselves ‘as a plain fact, whose right or wrong we question not;’ exercising the vigour now wasted in profitless enquiry, in the effort to do our duty, things being as they actually are. We are told, and we see as a fact, that there is an evil, ever working against the good, both around us and within us; and of the origin of this evil we know

simply as much as God has been pleased to tell us, and no more. The first intimation of pardon and deliverance was given, not in the language of promise to man, but of denunciation against man's enemy, the devil: 'The Lord God said unto the serpent, I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel;'¹ and 'when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman;'² and 'for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil;'³ that is, that in this planet, where the strange element of disobedience was exhibited in the sight of God's universe, the prince of evil should be vanquished; that by One wearing the nature which God created very good, the enemy who had tempted should be repelled; that on this earth where death came by sin, death should be overcome by righteousness. This planet is the battle-field between God and Satan, good and evil; men are not carrying on an independent warfare, either of rebellion against God, or resistance to Satan; the conflict is between those great antagonists; and men range themselves on one side or the other; either to fight the good fight of faith, and be partakers of the Master's triumph, or to league with the enemy of God and share his everlasting destruction. It is a war of spirits, and every human soul is engaged in it;

¹ Genesis, iii. 15.

² Galatians, iv. 4.

³ 1 St. John, iii. 8.

and though Christ has by His death effectually secured the final overthrow of the evil one, yet the victory will not be completed until He comes in glory ; just as He abolished death by His resurrection, and yet men continue to die, and death is the last enemy that shall be destroyed ; meanwhile, there is a continuous conflict between life and death, good and evil, light and darkness, between Christ and Belial ; and every action and feeling and thought tends to the one side or the other. The Redeemed are called ‘out of darkness into His marvellous light,’ ‘translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son ;’ and by the manifestation of God in our nature, His people are made ‘children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ ;’ and when the Church thus triumphs in her divine Head over all spiritual evil, then shall be accomplished the great purpose to which the whole history of the human race has been tending since the creation of man ; for then ‘unto principalities and powers in the heavenly places shall be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God :’ the manifestation of His mercy, His pardoning grace, and His wisdom, to the whole intelligent universe. Ours is a high calling ; so high above our conceptions that we speak of our destiny with as little definite idea as a child recording the marvels of astronomy, or naming numbers to which it attaches no meaning ; yet the child sees the stars with reverent wonder, and rejoices in

the beams of the sun, of whose distance or nature or action he can give no account; and the Christian rejoices in being called a son of God and a joint heir with Christ, while he does not attempt to fathom the dignity and glory of the title. He has a definite hope, a hope anchored in Christ, sure and steadfast; he has a love and a trust which find their home in the bosom of God; and he prays that ‘having this hope in Him, he may purify himself even as He is pure.’ The nature of this hope is purification; for holiness, that is likeness to Christ, is its very essence; it is impossible that there can exist a hope in Him which is not, in proportion to its strength, holy and purifying; St. John says ‘*every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.*’ Hereafter ‘we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is;’ this resemblance will be the *result*, not the *condition*, of that vision; and therefore meanwhile we grow into the likeness by the study and contemplation of His character. ‘The life of Jesus is not described to be like a picture in a chamber of pleasure, only for beauty and entertainment of the eye; but like the Egyptian hieroglyphics, where every feature is a precept, and the images converse with men by sense and signification of excellent discourse.’¹

When He shall appear again in power and great glory, where shall we, God’s children, be? Either called out of the grave by the same voice

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

that said, ‘ Lazarus, come forth ;’ or else ‘ caught up to meet the Lord in the air,’ without passing through the crucible of death ; in either case the ‘ mortal body quickened by the Spirit that dwelleth in us ;’ and ‘ fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.’

‘ When I awake up after Thy likeness I shall be satisfied.’

SEPTUAGESIMA.

O Lord, we beseech Thee favourably to hear the prayers of Thy people ; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by Thy goodness, for the glory of Thy Name ; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

IT seems as though persecution and distress were the normal condition of the Church ; and that to our present state, in which the Lord has set a hedge around us and sheltered us from every rough wind, many of the prayers in our Liturgy, and of the promises in our Bible too, appear inapplicable ; and though each individual in the secret of his heart may be conscious of some suffering which he justly deserves, and of which he tastes the bitterness, yet we must beware of

falsifying our experience by speaking of ourselves as mourners or sufferers when we are not, in order to bring ourselves under the promises which may seem superfluous to a state of repose; let us speak the truth from our hearts and in our hearts.

Were we to receive the due reward of our deeds, *punishment* would be the portion of all; and when, as a Church or as individuals, we find ourselves free from chastisement, we should especially remember that God hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; that He is dealing with us not according to our deserving, but according to His compassion; yet we must guard against the error of setting up one of the divine attributes in opposition to another; we must not take refuge from His justice in His goodness, but in that Sanctuary where both are combined, in Whom righteousness and peace have met together, in Whom God can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; ‘a just God and a Saviour.’ The punishment of His enemies is suspended, the punishment justly due to His children is averted, only through the atonement of Him ‘Who bore our sins in His own Body on the tree.’ If we are ‘found in Him’ we are not exempt from suffering—‘in the world ye shall have tribulation;’ but suffering changes its character from punishment to discipline, from the righteous infliction of a Judge to the tender

chastening of a Father. And it is well when suffering does come, to ask wherefore? to ‘hear the rod and who hath appointed it.’ Every chastisement has its especial message.

‘Lovest thou praise? the cross is shame,
Or ease? the cross is bitter grief.’

We may read in our pain the sin or error it is sent to correct, as the physician’s prescription tells the nature of the disease it is intended to remedy.

In actual or anticipated sorrow, let our cry for relief be merged in the prayer, ‘Father, glorify Thy Name.’ He will glorify it by deliverance from suffering or support under it; and finally He will glorify it in that day when ‘He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe;’ when we shall be clothed in the radiant robe of His perfect righteousness.

Meanwhile, let us believe as a fact what we have just declared, that we are justly punished for our offences; let us not think more lightly of the evil of sin because its punishment is averted or delayed. ‘Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil,’¹

¹ Ecclesiastes, viii. 11.

SEXAGESIMA.

O Lord God, who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do ; Mercifully grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THERE are some words in Holy Scripture which, like the pillar of old, present light to His people and darkness to His enemies ; among these is the expression, ‘the world passeth away,’ the death knell of the worldling, and sweet as the church bells of his home to the Christian pilgrim ; such, too, is the word first spoken by Hagar, ‘Thou God seest me.’ Is this to us a sound of gladness or of terror ? Let us be assured that whatever we would willingly hide from God is a work of darkness ; whatever we desire to spread out before Him, is so far penetrated by the light. Happy is he who can lovingly appeal to God’s Omniscience and say, ‘Thou God seest me ;’ blessed if he can truly add, ‘Thou seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do ;’ not in our inoffensiveness, not in our uprightness, not in our alms-deeds, not in anything that man justly calls good ; and furthermore, not in our penitence, not in our prayers, not in our faith, not in anything which God has wrought in us ; not in our penitence, but in Him who welcomes the penitent ; not in our

prayers, but in Him Who hears and answers prayer; not in our faith, but in Jesus Christ who is the object of our faith; we are saved, not by our believing in Christ, but by Christ believed in by us.

Helplessness, felt and acknowledged helplessness, is the state in which we are prepared to seek and to obtain His mighty aid; ‘to him that hath no strength He increaseth might;’ but too often we feel and act as if we had a little strength of our own—just enough to hinder a total and entire dependence, and yet so little as to be an excuse for continual failures, and slips, and falls. If God, the heart searcher, ‘sees that we put not our trust in anything that we do,’ then He assures us, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Having denied ourselves, and renounced all confidence in the flesh, we ask His merciful defence against all adversity, and undoubtedly that prayer will be answered; but let us remember, that He who sees us through and through, who sees all things, who knows the end from the beginning, who searches the secrets of our hearts, and of all the hearts with which we come in contact, may know that what we call adversity is really His best blessing in disguise, and that woe and bitterness may be hid in what we call prosperity. Therefore let us place our petition in His hands to grant as He sees best, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

QUINQUAGESIMA.

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth ; Send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee : Grant this for Thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EVERY good has a corresponding evil as its dark shadow ; the danger of contrition is selfishness, through a habit of introspection ; the danger of abstinence and self-denial, is severity ; we are so apt to be harsh to others when we are, or fancy that we are, severe to self. The Church then wisely precedes the season of Lent, in which especially the eye is turned inward and her children are called to endure hardness, by a prayer for charity—His most excellent gift of charity.

All our doings, our self-examination, our penitence, our contrition, our cries for mercy on ourselves, our knowledge, our alms-deeds, all, without Charity, are nothing worth ; and this is not our own judgment or estimate, but God's teaching ; He has ‘taught us that all our doings without Charity are nothing worth.’

A life of fulfilled duties, illumined by the knowledge of Christian morals ; a sincerity that

would suffer martyrdom for its convictions; a sense of right which would give all to feed the poor, yet which hath not the living soul of Love—are only like the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal which in the Temple service gave unconscious praise, as the ‘musical instruments of God;’ a senseless sound in the ear of Him who measures life by Love.

Believing this, we beseech Him in the most solemn of all appeals to send us the Holy Spirit; not one or another of that blessed Spirit’s influences, but His very Self, His very presence—to pour into our hearts that most excellent gift.

St. Paul, after recounting the beneficence of the Corinthian converts, whose ‘deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality,’ exclaims, ‘Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.’ Charity is His gift; His noblest gift, because it is a portion of the divine nature; ‘God is love; and he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him;’ and it is not a gift external as it were to the recipient, but one poured into the heart, and so becoming part and parcel of his existence.

Charity is the very bond of peace and of all virtues. Fragments of many high and good qualities may be found in the human character, like shattered stones of a ruined temple; but they lie scattered, as when one cutteth and heweth wood upon the ground, until they are

cemented into unity by the spirit of Love. Yes; ‘He measures life by love;’ and the soul destitute of love is counted dead before Him; the life of God is not kindled in an unloving heart; he hath a name to live, but he is dead until the spirit of love is poured into him.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CONTRITION is not the whole of repentance, but it is an essential part of it; there may be a temporary sorrow for sin without a change of life and purpose; but such a change does not take place without a sense of sorrow and shame for what is past. The nearer we draw to God, the more entirely we believe and trust in the atoning sacrifice of our Redeemer, the more keenly shall we perceive, and the more deeply we shall bewail, the sins of our hearts and the transgressions of our lives, both past and present.

‘It is a false and unholy doctrine now intruded

boldly by self-constituted teachers, that because our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake we have no reason to regret them; that they are so separated from us that they cease to be a cause of pain or humiliation. Thus saith the Lord, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes; *then* shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight.' 'I will establish My covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: *that thou mayest remember, and be confounded*, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.'¹ Such was the experience of Job: 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'²

The heart of stone feels no contrition; it is when He gives the heart of flesh that He makes it contrite; the saint will blush and weep in the secret presence of God over a fault which appears a trifle or a jest to those who do not try to walk

¹ Ezekiel, xxxvi. 25-31; xvi. 62, 63.

² Job, xlvi. 5, 6.

in the light. A worthy lamenting of sin, and a worthy acknowledgment of wretchedness, signifies such as is suitable and in due proportion to that which is lamented and confessed.

Contrition or repentance never can blot out sin; as it has been truly said, our tears of penitence need to be washed from their impurity; but contrition is like the bunch of hyssop with which the blood of sprinkling was applied; and it makes us seek that which alone can cleanse the conscience from dead works.

‘Lord, let a new manner of life prove that a new Spirit hath descended on me; for true penitence is new life, and true praise unremitting penitence, and the observation of a perpetual sabbath from sin, its occasions, fuel, and danger. For as penitence destroys old sins, so do new sins destroy penitence.’¹

This prayer is intended to be our daily utterance through the season of Lent; the renewed heart, and the broken and contrite heart which God does not despise, are daily to be sought of Him who ‘is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.’²

¹ Bishop Andrewes.

² Acts, v. 31.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

O Lord, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

THE fasting in the wilderness was ‘for our sake.’ We know not precisely how; but when we cry, ‘By Thy fasting and temptation, Good Lord, deliver us,’ we recognize it not only as one evidence of His great humility, but as having a part in the work of Redemption; of that great work in which the Incarnate God did destroy the works of the devil, and did restore what sin had marred. It was part too of His own preparation for being our merciful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities; it is part of the victory won for us, and part of the example set before us; and in this latter view it is chiefly regarded in this Collect, which speaks not of the temptation in the wilderness, but only of the fasting.

The subjection of the flesh to the Spirit, the recognition of a Master and Owner, for whom, and not for ourselves, we are bound to keep both body and mind in working order, is the duty of

our whole lives ; but the Church appoints one season for its especial and distinctive observance, wisely judging that in practice as well as in doctrine, we require the systematic reminder which the course of the Christian year supplies.

The whole subject of lawful and unlawful indulgence in amusement and every other form of self-gratification is included in the words, ‘ Give us grace to use *such* abstinence.’

Now the true object of all abstinence from things lawful, (things in themselves evil are not here considered, for no circumstance can justify even their most moderate indulgence,) is, ‘ that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey His godly motions in righteousness and true holiness;’ and undoubtedly, while the rule is one and single, that the flesh must be subdued to the Spirit, there are differences in the application of it according to the varieties of constitution, mental and bodily. Thus, of what is peculiarly called fasting—abstinence from the usual food either as to quantity or quality—there are many whose intellects are brighter, and whose passions and tempers are more under control, while exercising severely this form of self-denial; while there are many whose nerves are so irritated by hunger, or the frame so exhausted, as to give the body all the supremacy which conscious suffering obtains. In common sense, these two constitutions ought not to receive the same treatment. When Jonathan was, by tasting

a morsel of honey, enabled to see clearly and to take his place in the battle-field, his body was evidently more under the control of his mind than while faint with hunger his thoughts were absorbed in efforts to endure it patiently; while on the other side, when Daniel abstained from the meat of the king's table, his bodily vigour was unimpaired and his character strengthened. Nothing that unfits the body for the work set before it is '*such abstinence*' as this prayer desires.

Again, there is no doubt the mental constitution requires recreation; there may be exceptions, cases of men whose refreshment is found in variety of labour, but they are rare. 'A merry heart' is not the same as a heart filled with deep joy, yet it is continually spoken of in Scripture as a token of that deeper felicity, and it is a time of national judgment when 'all the merry-hearted do sigh'; playfulness or mirth is the spray on the wave of life which catches the passing sunbeam though incapable of retaining it; and it is a good gift from God, though not among His best or noblest.

Many excellent people make war against this; children are allowed to be playful, but the sportiveness of youth, and the lighter fancy which sometimes sparkles round the hoary head, are regarded with a frown, as frivolous or vain or worldly. Where this is done, we generally find outbursts of wilful pleasure-seeking, or mero seness

of temper, or severity of judgment: therefore it is not '*such* abstinence;' but where there is most of this spontaneous lightness of heart, this natural playfulness, there will be least necessity or craving for stimulants; 'a merry heart doeth good like a medicine;' and if our boys and girls carry it forth with them into life, instead of leaving it behind in the nursery, every common object will be full of vitality and interest, every common thing will be fresh and bright, and the dissipation, falsely called gaiety, will have no attractions.

Recreation, in its true sense, is what the mind does require; that which refreshes after labour and prepares for its renewal; but whatever exhausts mind or body fails of this purpose, and is in fact spending labour on an unworthy object of pursuit.

The object of that personal self-denial which, always necessary in whatever form suits the constitution, the Church especially recommends at this season, is twofold—first for self-discipline, and secondly for the benefit of others. We are ever ready to set up one of these objects in rivalry of the other, but in God's Providence we find them combined. The discipline of each individual will be most truly found in 'seeking not his own;' in 'pleasing not himself;' in esteeming, and permitting his friends to 'esteem, others better than himself;' and in 'going about doing good,' where this is a reality and not the mere indulgence of a benevolent impulse.

It is impossible to fulfil our duties by all connected with us and by all who cross our path for one day without much denial of our own gratification. It may be said, ‘You find your pleasure in that of others, therefore it is no self-denial.’ Be it so; the martyr truly finds his joy in laying down his life, but that does not lessen the reality of the sacrifice.

The necessities of our fellow-creatures, and the duty of alms-giving, put a sharp check to luxury in food, decoration, and every indulgence exclusively personal; while the wants of our brethren, the sick, the ignorant, the ungrateful, the perverse, the vulgar, the unclean, give abundant opportunities for the mortification of the flesh without the self-inflections which would separate us from our kind, or exalt us in our own sight.

‘*Such abstinence*’ is the duty especially set before us in the present season. ‘Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, and to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him? and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh?’¹

Fasting is a means to an end; towards God, to set the spirit more free to seek Him in self-abasement and in supplication; towards man, to crush our selfishness and to send us forth in deeds

¹ Isaiah, lviii.

of mercy ; towards both, the abnegation of self in every form, so that we may live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves ; Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls ; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THERE are two aspects of our state before God ; one, the fact that we are sinful and helpless ; the other, our own consciousness of that fact. In another Collect we plead with Him, that He sees that we put not our trust in anything that we do, that He sees our sense of dependence ; here we go deeper, and found our plea on the fact itself, that 'we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves,' whether we feel it so or not ; that 'we have no power to help ourselves' is a fact, whether it sets us struggling 'like a wild bull in a net,' or whether it leads us to a sweet and loving surrender of ourselves to His guidance. It is a fact, whether we like it or not ; a fact belonging to our state as creatures, though stained and darkened by our state as sinners. The created spirits of the

blessed above have no power of themselves to help themselves, but theirs is a conscious and joyous dependence ; they would not, if they could, be their own rulers and guides ; they would not be lords of themselves. To become holy, as they are, we must acquiesce in this fact, and ask God in merciful consideration of it, to take us out of our own keeping ; to save us from ourselves, to be our Helper, and to keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls. Closely are they united in our spiritual life ; the adversities which happen to the body, the adverse circumstances, whether of luxury or want, of society or solitude, of depressing sickness, or the robust pride of health, may tend to the ‘evil thoughts which do assault and hurt the soul.’ The soul is not like a bird in a cage ; it is closely and intimately connected with its dwelling-place ; the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, and God’s protection is needed alike for both ; to defend the one either from or in adversity, and the other from the fiery darts of the wicked, which find entrance through the infirmities of ‘this fretful flesh.’

These thoughts which seem to rise spontaneously, are the whispers of the good or the evil spirits which are contending for the mastery ; our own evil hearts often reject the good and admit the bad or worthless ; an evil thought *cherished* is in God’s sight the same as if it were developed in action. To control even the unruly tongue is an

easier task than to control the thoughts, and even of that it is said, 'the tongue can no man tame ;' but God can ; and we are just as guilty if we fail to ask His help as if the power of control were directly our own. There are many classes of evil thoughts ; those which take their colour from the passions, and those which are of the intellect ; hard, unjust, cruel, suspicious thoughts of our fellow-creatures, or bold, daring, presumptuous, blasphemous thoughts about God. How are we to escape from them ? It is not well to fight hand to hand with every evil suggestion that crosses the mind ; to do so may give them substance, and a home in the memory and imagination ; it is often better to pass them by, to refuse to listen, to suppress their utterance, and to dismiss them with contempt rather than argue with them ; and against such as we know to be evil, a simple ejaculation, 'Good Lord, deliver me from this bad thought,' is the safest and surest weapon. But where they pretend to be good, and the falsehood requires detection, the case is different ; God then calls us in dependence on His help to exercise the reason He has given us ; yet even in these subtle sins of thought perhaps there was a moment when the first link of the now lengthening chain would have been broken at the cry, 'Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit.' Speculative thought is to some natures the field of trial which passion is to others ; sceptical doubts or difficulties

are to one man what the lusts of the flesh are to another; intellectual questioning assailed Thomas as covetousness assailed Judas. The noblest and purest spirits are often thus tempted in the region of thought, and they are called to the very same fight under Christ's banner against recurring doubts or blasphemous questionings or irreverent suggestions, as the incipient murderer is against the passion of hatred or revenge. Their safety is in flight, not into the strongholds of prejudice or self-confidence, but a flight into the bosom of Him, Who knowing their thoughts said, 'What question ye among yourselves?' and Who yielded to the honest doubts of Thomas an evidence that brought the joyful confession, 'My Lord and my God!'

We sometimes excuse the existence of evil thoughts by the plea, 'We cannot hinder them, they come of themselves; we have not time or power to resist their entrance;' but this helplessness is the very reason why we ought to fly for help to the Saviour; and it is because we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, that we must ask Him to subdue and control and direct the thoughts of our hearts and the thoughts of our intellect, by the inbreathed influence of the Holy Spirit.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants, and stretch forth the right hand of Thy Majesty, to be our defence against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE expression ‘The right hand of Thy Majesty’ directs our thoughts to the connection in which the words occur in Holy Scripture: ‘When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.’ It suggests the idea of His Royal Priesthood; there we behold both the Victim and the sacrificer; ‘the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world,’ Who ‘by the sacrifice of Himself put away sin,’ and ever liveth to make intercession for us; our ‘Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,’ exalted, not to forget but to succour those whom He is not ashamed, even now when He has passed into the Heavens, to call His brethren. At the right hand of the Eternal Majesty, that is, as the acting power of God, is He Whose hands were pierced for our iniquities; and surely that power will be stretched forth in answer to the hearty desires of His humble servants, to defend them from their enemies and His; their real enemies, the world,

the flesh, and the devil, are His enemies as well; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, the friendship of the world is enmity against God; the devil is alike the accuser of the brethren and the enemy of God; we are sure of the victory if these are the foes we desire to conquer; for then He says to us, ‘The battle is not yours but God’s; stand still, and see the salvation of God.’

But is it so that these are the enemies we dread? What or whom do we in truth account as our enemies from whom we need deliverance? Let us answer this question before we offer this prayer for defence against them.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Do we really believe that we do for our evil deeds worthily deserve to be punished? Why then such amazement, ‘as though some strange thing happened to us, ‘when He with rebukes doth correct men for iniquity?’ Why do we account peace and plenty our normal condition, which calls for no gratitude, and feel injured whenever it is disturbed? Why do we take all our temporal

blessings as if they were ours by right, and when pain or bereavement is our portion, talk of a mysterious providence?

And if we do in general terms acknowledge that we deserve to be punished, let us inquire what are those evil deeds of ours. Many join in the general Confession who would point by point deny any one proof that they had done the things they ought not to have done, or neglected any one thing they ought to have done; but it is necessary to be specific in our self-examination, that we may be specific in our confessions and our prayers; that we may seek the application of the blood of sprinkling not in vague and general terms, but in its cleansing power according to our requirements. In the consecration of the Jewish priests it was directed, ‘Thou shalt take of the blood and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot.’¹ It might have been said, ‘Sprinkle the men,’ and all the parts would have been included; but God specifies part by part, to teach us that the cleansing must be not only for inherent guilt, but for actual misdoings.

What are these evil deeds of ours? Let us bring them before God, that He may pardon each fault, positive or negative. In the great fact of our fallen and sinful nature we must not merge the individual acts of sin, as though they added

¹ Exodus, xxix. 20.

nothing ; neither must we overlook the fact that our evil deeds are but the fruit of a corrupt tree.

‘I have sinned of a verity, O Lord, and I am made of sins, for even my life maketh it manifest.’¹

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon Thy people ; that by Thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

‘**THY** people,’—yes ; the confession of guilt, the conviction that we deserve punishment, should never cloud the humble confidence that we are His people ; it is truly in the embrace of the Father that the returning son can best pour forth the cry, ‘Father, I have sinned ;’ and it is the fact that we are His chosen people, that, while it stamps our sin with the deepest dye, encourages us to look to Him for pardon and renewing ; for pardon through the blood of atonement, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. God hath separated the Christian Church to Himself, as He separated Israel of old ; and we are His people upon earth, whether through our rebellious disobedience the relationship aggravates

¹ Bishop Andrewes.

our condemnation, or whether it leads us in earnest prayer to beseech Him to govern us by His great goodness. ‘Of what kind soever I am, be it good or bad, I am ever Thine. If Thou cast me out, who shall take me in? If Thou disregard me, who shall look upon me?’ The greatest personal mercy is to take us out of our own keeping; to govern by His directing Providence our outward actions, by His indwelling Spirit our inner life, and thus to preserve us both in body and soul even for evermore; even to the time when ‘the saints of God shall possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.’¹

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER.

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of Thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIS prayer is of especial interest, because it is appointed to be used daily during the most solemn week of the Christian year, so that we know its

¹ Daniel, vii. 18.

sound scarcely dies out as it is echoed round the world and taken up again wherever the English tongue is spoken; and because it is naturally connected with the Scriptures which are read day by day during that period.

The eyes of the whole Christian Church are riveted during Passion-tide on the last sufferings of the Saviour; hour by hour, step by step, we are invited to draw near and see is there any sorrow like unto His sorrow. There is no display to excite the imagination; no thrilling words to call up a passing emotion; nothing to work on the feelings through the senses; none of that detail of the bodily suffering and the humiliating concomitants of the body's death, in which some minds take a strange delight; but calmly, quietly, the history of His last hours drops upon our hearts in circumstantial truth, with an awful tranquillity, like the stillness of the night-watch beside the bed of death. In these daily readings the prophecy is linked with the fulfilment, reminding us that all was fore-known and fore-ordained; that ere He undertook to become the propitiation for our sins, He had gazed all down the deep abyss; that nothing came by chance or coincidence, but all, in those minutest points of suffering which like light-winged arrows strike the sharpest, all was anticipated. We are invited to a holy and reverent sympathy with Him; as He permitted Thomas for the assurance of his faith to touch the wounded side and hands, so does He for the

softening of our rough hard hearts permit us thus to share His hours of long long anguish described by four different observers, each bringing out some trait that especially touched a chord in his own spirit.

There is much of this hushed and subdued tone in this Collect, which is to accompany the daily readings of the Holy Week ; it gives no utterance to our sympathy or to our emotions ; it makes no profession of our fidelity as contrasted with the falsehood of those who forsook Him and fled ; no declaration of our adoration, as contrasted with the blasphemies of unbelief ; but it simply lays before the Lord our Teacher the lessons we want to learn : perhaps the calmness of its tone almost sounds like want of feeling ; but no, it is the calm of depth, not the stillness of an icebound surface. It traces this wondrous tale of anguish back to its source, the tender love of God towards mankind ; it was as the expression of that love that Jesus came forth from the bosom of the Father, as the Word which proclaims that God is Love. That eternal love sent the Son from the glory which He had before the world was, to take upon Him our flesh for the express purpose of making Himself an offering for sin : He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross ; and that great Sacrifice was not only made and accepted on our behalf, but was performed within human sight, and recorded for human instruction.

His "great humility" consists in the emptying

Himself of His inherent glory, when He said, ‘Lo I come, to do Thy Will, O God;’ in the whole fact of His human existence, from the Virgin’s womb to the Cross, wherein, having assumed our veritable nature, He ever laid down the human will before the Will of God; ‘Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt;’ ‘Father, not my will but Thine be done;’ ‘Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.’ He voluntarily assumed the condition of a creature, actually to obey as man’s representative, and also to let mankind see and learn what obedience is; and we are called to follow Him in the same abnegation of self; so that we may say with St. Paul, ‘I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’

That ‘great humility,’ which no created being can attain, because none have such a height from which to descend, is placed within our view, to exhibit the true relation of the creature to the Creator; for it was as a creature in our flesh, the Eternal Son learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ‘We cannot part with Heaven for Thee;’ but we may by the Spirit’s guidance follow the steps of His great humility, as He trod our earth, a Man among men; we can see Him wash the disciples’ feet, and hear Him say, ‘If I then, your Lord and Master, have

washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.'

'Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His patience;' yes, patience had once her perfect work, and we are called to look upon it. The strokes of an invisible Providence; the sufferings that come through the malignity or the folly of man; those sudden and great events which compress a life into a moment; those slow and lingering trials which are like a chain lengthening as we go; those little vexations, against which the calmest mind will often fret and tumultuate, our Saviour Jesus Christ patiently endured them all. While the world's redemption hung in suspense, while the blessedness of Heaven and the horrors of hell rose before His mental vision, He endured undisturbed the petty insults of human malignity; the thorns, the nails, the spear, the mockery, the contempt, were all felt; his tender heart wore no shield of pride or anger or indifference to protect it from man's cruelty. He loved His torturers, and the mockings and revilings of the multitude were to Him what the same insults would be to us from the nearest and dearest we have on earth; His love it was which made Him pre-eminently 'a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' In bodily pain we may learn patience from His Cross; the thought of the crown of thorns can bow the throbbing brow in submission and soothe its agony; in the extremity of mortal anguish the impatient murmur

for ourselves or those more dear, may be hushed by the memory that ‘all His bones were out of joint;’ and the tortured and torturing nerves may own Him as their ruler when we remember that the centres of nervous sensation were pierced while the weight of His human frame hung on them for lingering hours. And in mental suffering; oh! how graciously has He trod the path of obscurity and poverty, and passed before us through the scorn of the world and the faithlessness of friendship, and the failures and mistakes of sympathy!

‘He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.’ We cannot do as He has done, but we can ask God to conform us to His image, to make us know the fellowship of His sufferings, and to raise us to the life of righteousness by that indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whereby our bodies shall be quickened in the morning of the Resurrection. (Romans, viii. 2.)

‘ Who hath learned lowliness
From his Lord’s cradle; patience from His Cross.’

GOOD FRIDAY.

Almighty God, we beseech Thee graciously to behold this Thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross, who now liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before Thee for all estates of men in Thy holy Church; that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve Thee; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

O merciful God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that Thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to Thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

THERE is a striking contrast between the closely pruned language of these prayers, which have for ages expressed the inmost heart of the Church,

and the redundant utterances of modern compositions, which rather tell the thoughts and emotions of the speaker than his wants, which are rather a statement of doctrine and a profession of feeling than a pleading of faith.

This reticence is very marked in the Collects for Good Friday—that day above all other days, when the hearts of the people bend before one thought, ‘as the trees of the wood are stirred by the wind;’ when a joy the most sublime hides itself in a sorrow the most profound: yet what could we say? · What words could express that sorrowful adoration, that tender reverence? It may well be that ‘silence suiteth best.’

‘Words weaker than your grief would make grief more.’

God knoweth how each heart among the assembled worshippers is bowed down as the idea of the Redeemer’s anguish lies upon it, burnt in by the thought—it was for us men and for our redemption He suffered; He made His soul an offering for sin—my sins! My sins! what was their part in that great burden, when the Lord made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all? Do they now crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame? God knoweth how each one among the thousands kneeling in His presence mourns for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and is in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born: but such feelings do not seek, and cannot find, a public utterance. Firmly

and calmly arises the united prayer that He Whom we worship may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; that the redemption may be accomplished for which such a price was paid.

The prayer is one, though divided into three parts. First, for the whole human family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross; and we ask the Father graciously to behold them: that as He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son—that as He is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself—so He would graciously look upon the great family of Adam, with a mercy and a wisdom that is beyond our powers of thought. Then for the two great divisions of that family—the Church, and those who are not within the Church. For the Church we pray for all estates of men therein, that every member of the same may in his vocation and ministry serve the Lord. Here would be the completion of Christ's work in the Church, if every member individually became a true and godly and faithful servant, if every branch in the Vine became a fruit-bearing branch. And then we look beyond, on the dark places of the earth, and beseech Him, who hateth nothing that He hath made, to fetch home to His fold those who are wandering in sin and ignorance; we do not ask Him to take them into Heaven as they are—that were a moral impossibility, for His pre-

would be no bliss to them ; but that they may be converted and live ; that their ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of God's Word, may be taken away, and that they may be among those of whom the Saviour spoke, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and One Shepherd.'

David foretold the restitution of all things, when this ingathering shall take place ; when the Redeemer shall have dominion from sea to sea ; when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory ; and he concludes the Psalm (lxxii.) with the words, 'The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are completed ;—the work of the Son of God, who is David's Son and David's Lord, is accomplished.

EASTER EVEN.

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of Thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him ; and that through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection ; for His merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIS interval between the Death and the Resurrection is a solemn pause. The Crucifixion

was a sight which comes within the range of human perception; so was the Resurrection; for the Divine secrets which lie beneath and around and beyond, cast no shadow of indistinctness over these visible events. But in this interval, the body of Jesus lay—as ours will lie, and as many we have cherished are lying—buried out of sight, in the grave, hidden; and His human soul was where the souls of those who have left us now are, in the unseen place;—that place to which they were gone before we had time to say, It is over now;—that place so near yet so far off;—that place of safe keeping, of which we know little, except that it is so pure and bright, that to be there is ‘far better’ than all even St. Paul enjoyed on earth of spiritual communion and holy service; a ‘gain’ beyond the precious gain of winning sinners to Christ, for to him, in the midst of a successful ministry, ‘to die was gain’;—that place of joy and felicity, where we almost congratulate our darlings as they are entering through the gate of death;—that unseen place whose boundaries we know not; which may include the atmosphere around us, so that these human spirits may be nearer to us than our bodies are to each other;—that shadowy realm, which is nevertheless more real and true than all earth’s substance.

The Epistle which the Church appoints for this day sufficiently expresses her view of that article of our faith, ‘He descended into hell,’ or Hades, or the

unseen place. He went there to preach to spirits separate from the body; His human soul communed with human souls, which were ‘unclothed,’ and as yet ‘not clothed upon’ in that place of ‘safe keeping.’ There are difficulties which we must neither ignore nor presumptuously investigate; we simply are taught that it was so, *as a fact*; and then we are led to pray that by a spiritual participation in His death, into which we are baptized, we may be buried with Him, and with Him pass to a joyful resurrection, through the grave and gate of death; through those gates of Hades which shall not be permitted to prevail against one of those in whom the Spirit dwelleth.

There is unspeakable sweetness and strong consolation to the mourner in the knowledge that Jesus was in the grave; that it is ‘the place where the Lord lay.’ There is nothing nature shrinks from in the parting hour like this; the fact that ‘He is dead’ is scarcely realized till it is followed by the burial; the dust to dust, and the closing of the sod over what was most lovely and beloved; but ‘It is the place where the Lord lay’—for ever consecrated!

‘The Saviour has passed through its portals before thee;
And the lamp of His love is thy guide through the gloom.’

EASTER DAY.

Almighty God, who through Thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

AT the festival of the Nativity we adorn our churches and our homes with evergreens, as a memorial of the undying hope which exists through the chill gloom of life's winter. Our English Christmas, with the warmth and brightness diffused through our dwellings, and its natural cold and darkness, may represent the conflict between external earthly sorrow and inward heavenly joy; joy in the midst of woe, light to those who sit in darkness, life in the region and shadow of death.

But there is no such contrast in the festival of the Resurrection; all nature is breathing the glorious utterance of life out of death; and instead of wrestling with her, we have to follow her leading; instead of silencing her note of gladness, we have but to take it up, and attune its melody to a nobler Resurrection than that which we see springing in leafy fragrance out of

the fields, and touching the forest trees and the hedge-rows alike with glory. ‘For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell;’ and the Voice of the Beloved sanctifies the voice of nature, and says to His Church, ‘Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.’¹

Never do the voices of Nature and Revelation join in so sweet a harmony as when we keep our Easter feast on a bright April morning, and nature echoes the song of Inspiration. ‘They that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead; thy dead men shall live, together with My dead Body shall they arise.’² ‘Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept.’³

That great mystery of the resurrection of the body baffled even those philosophers who discerned the immortality of the soul; the butterfly spoke to them of the emancipation of the spirit from its mortal coil; but they bewailed that while spring-tide brought back the foliage and the flowers, man lay down in the dust to rise no

¹ Canticles, ii. 11-18.

² Isaiah, xxvi. 19.

³ 1 Corinthians, xv. 20.

more. It is emphatically a truth of revelation, which man's highest aspirations never could have attained; but, while nature never made it known, all nature bears witness to it; and the whole vegetable kingdom testifies by analogy to what it never could reveal, reminds us of a lesson it never could have taught, that there is a life through death of body as well as of spirit. And to us, who know that 'Christ is risen from the dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept,' each spring-tide renews the assurance that our dead shall rise again, each one in his own personal identity, as truly, as distinctly, as the plants we bury out of sight come up again from their winter sleep, each one in its own peculiar colour, with its own peculiar penciling, and its own peculiar fragrance; what we have sown in corruption, will as surely rise in incorruption as the unsightly bulb is now appearing in the lovely hyacinth; as surely in their own individuality as those bulbs arise each in its proper hue, which was mysteriously concealed within the earth-tinged ball; as accurately as every leaf of tree or shrub gives back its own peculiar shade of green. A little child, full of the joy of finding the earliest primrose, was asked, 'Have you anything sown in the ground?' 'Yes,' she replied, 'three little sisters;' and a few days after, in repeating the Apostles' Creed, she stopped at 'the resurrection of the body,' and said, 'That means coming up again like the primroses.'

There will ever be harmonious variety in the garden of the Lord. Yes; the pure snowdrop, and the sparkling crocus, and the fragrant violet, and the cheerful daisy, and the tender blue-bell, and the delicate wood-sorrel, and the glittering celandine, that strew our Easter paths, combine to tell us that our darlings will be given back to us, each in his own order, each his very self; glorified, it is true, even as the root has developed into the lovely flower; sown in dishonour, raised in glory; yet each himself and not another, so that we shall 'know them by look and voice;' and thus may we take comfort concerning our buried treasures while we 'consider the lilies how they grow,' and see that 'God giveth them a body as it hath pleased Him, and to *every seed his own body*,' and believe that 'so also is the resurrection of the dead.'

'Christ is risen from the dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' The exulting notes of the Easter Anthem sounding in our ears, and its triumphant thoughts swelling our hearts, we turn to pray. The characteristic of the Collects is that they are the cry of want to the ear of mercy; they are not didactic; they are not intended to instruct the worshipper, but to help him to lay his wants before God. We cease from the voice of joyous adoration in which we joined with Cherubim and Seraphim

to laud and magnify His glorious name ; and we come as suppliants founding our plea on what He is, and on what He has already done for us, while we come to ask for what we need.

How has He ‘overcome death’ while yet we see death desolating homes and hearts ? Just as He had overcome the death of vegetation, when two months ago there was not a bud to be seen ; life was preserved invisible to us ; and to us He ‘opens the gate of everlasting life ;’ we see it not yet, but we are told, and we believe, that ‘as Jesus died and rose again, so them also that sleep in Jesus God will bring with Him ;’¹ we believe that through the grave and gate of death we are to follow Him to a joyful resurrection. Such a prospect must awaken ‘good desires ;’ of His special grace it is revealed to us, and of His special grace a desire after it is excited ; but alas ! Easter thoughts are often but a passing emotion, brief as the tones of the organ which lately thrilled every nerve in the congregation, and now stands silent and lifeless ; and vain are such ‘good desires’ unless He give us the farther grace of His continual help, to bring the same to good effect ; unless He give that ‘second grace, not to receive in vain the first.’

The resurrection of the body to life everlasting is preceded by another resurrection : ‘ You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.’² There must be wrought in each indi-

¹ 1 Thessalonians, iv. 14.

² Ephesians, ii. 1.

vidual soul a new life by the power of the Holy Spirit; and until we are ‘risen with Christ’ by this spiritual revival, and ‘seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God,’¹ in vain for us is the open door, in vain for us the blood-bought victory.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Almighty Father, who hast given Thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification; Grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may always serve Thee in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

‘The distinctive doctrines of our faith are the central parts of the whole Revelation, from which emanate all its moral and spiritual effects.’—*Bishop of Oxford.*

THE grand doctrine of justification by faith in Christ Jesus, is founded upon the fact of His death and resurrection; He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; and on this doctrine rises the practical or moral edifice, that as Jesus died and rose again, so we must also die unto sin and live unto righteousness. In order to become strength to the soul, each truth of

¹ *Colossians*, iii. 1.

Revelation must be fused by fervent prayer, and ascend as incense before Him. We speak of God's gift to the whole world—the Son of God, who 'died for our sins and rose again for our justification ;' we obtain a personal interest in this great salvation by beseeching the Almighty Father to grant that as Jesus accomplished the type of the Paschal Lamb, so we may fulfil the type of those who partook of the benefits of that sacrifice ; putting away the leaven of malice and wickedness, and keeping the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Truth has an existence external to us and independent of us ; all God's revelation of His will and way is true, whether we believe it or not ; our unbelief cannot make the Word of God of none effect ; eternal Truth stands as an impregnable fortress, within which we may by faith take refuge and be safe for ever, or against which we may aim our puny arrows to our own destruction ; but sincerity is a state of the soul ; no part sealed up against the reception of divine truth ; no part desiring to be hidden from God ; all plain and open ; the word and act corresponding to the thought and feeling.

'Think not the faith by which the just shall live
Is a dead creed, a map correct of Heaven ;
Far less a feeling fond and fugitive,
A thoughtless gift, withdrawn as soon as given ;
It is an affirmation and an act,
That bids eternal truth be present fact.'

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Almighty God, who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE life and death of the Lord Jesus are beautifully told in His own words: ‘The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many;’ to be ‘both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life.’ Corresponding to this twofold work we are, as the wax to the signet, to receive a twofold blessing.

A full perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world, has once for all been offered by the atoning blood of Christ, to which man can add nothing; a full, free, unmerited salvation has been procured for mankind by His merits, to which fallen man has no claim of right; on which he can only lay hold by a simple unquestioning acceptance of God’s free and sovereign favour; and this, His inestimable benefit, we are most thankfully to receive. We are also given a model of godly life. Ere He

gave Himself a ransom for the many, He left us an example that we should follow His steps, and exhibited in life and action the morality and spirituality of the Gospel. It was said by a great philosopher, as the true means of communicating his system of morals, ‘I live before him.’ The Lord Jesus has lived before us, transcribing the love and purity of God into the language of human feeling and human action; He has shewn us not only what we ought to do, but what we ought to be; ‘He went about doing good,’ not in a form that could not be copied, but in meeting with His healing touch of love and sympathy the common ills of humanity. To follow the blessed steps of His most holy life,

‘We need not wind ourselves too high
For mortal man beneath the sky;’

but *daily* endeavour, each one for himself, in his own sphere, to walk as in similar circumstances Jesus walked.

For both these, the reception of God’s free gift, and our own walk of holiness, we are dependent on Divine grace to aid; sinful man is not more reluctant to obey the precepts of the Gospel than to accept its promises; his pride revolts against the one, as his self-indulgence does against the other; to both the carnal mind is repugnant, and the Holy Spirit alone can melt the heart to receive either; He alone can write not on tables of stone, but on **fleshy tables of the heart**, the doctrine of

the Gospel, which is ‘God is Love,’ or the precept of the Gospel, which is ‘Love God,’ and ‘let him that loves God love his brother also.’

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Almighty God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

THIS is one of the very few instances in which, in the Church Services, we distinguish ourselves from those for whom we plead; the cry for mercy upon miserable sinners identifies the state and the wants of other sinners with our own; our confessions and prayers include ourselves with others; but here we speak of them in the third person, and stand apart from those for whom we intercede; and we must not pass by this example of intercessory prayer without considering the import and value of that much neglected duty. Perhaps there is no act of charity so neglected as this, which costs us nothing, and which is indeed ‘twice blessed; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.’ It

is painful to hear an urgent appeal for alms followed up by ‘you can *at least* give your prayers,’ as though prayer were less valuable than silver and gold; but still more painful to hear, or to be conscious of, the ready promise given and forgotten, to pray for others. We cannot pray too much or too personally for our fellow-creatures; but we should be very careful not to undertake or profess to do it unless there is full purpose of heart to fulfil the pledge. Intercessory prayer may be very brief; the names simply brought before the throne of grace with an earnest petition for a blessing, may bring down ‘showers of blessing,’ more than we can ask or think. We are invited to ‘put Him in remembrance;’¹ ‘Ye that are the Lord’s remembrancers, keep not silence;’² we are commanded to ‘open thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction;’³ and we must recollect that He knows the whole case better than we could state it, and that therefore we need not shrink from intercessory prayer because we are ignorant of the state or circumstances. Perhaps, as we advance in years, we shall learn that there is no form of intercession more true and valuable than that which the infant lisps at his mother’s knee, when

‘Each earthly friend that has won his love,
Is named in his evening prayer.’

¹Isaiah, xlivi. 26. ²Isaiah, lxii. 6. (*margia.*) ³Proverbs, xxxi. 8.

‘Let us pray each one for all, as far as we know their need, that God may bless them in return, not as we know their need, but as He knows it. Only let us bring before God as fervently and as fully as we can, those wants of society which we see and feel ourselves. All wants are but parts of one great want, the want of love to God.’¹

The Collect for this day is peculiarly appropriate to the present period, when every kind of error has found some refined and subtile form in which to steal within the Church. Doubts and objections, formerly avowed and combated as infidel, are now cherished as an exercise of the right of private judgment; and many, who never fall into scepticism or popery, linger on the border-land of one or the other until they are entangled in difficulty and perplexity, if not worse; while the world has become so religious, or the Church so worldly, that we scarcely know what is meant by renouncing it according to our baptismal vow, and it is only in repeating the Catechism we presume to call it ‘this wicked world!’ God alone knows perfectly to ‘part error from crime;’ He alone discerns the internal machinery, and sees how a perverted or one-sided view may lead to error in theory or practice, while yet the heart is true to Him; and He alone can, by the light of His divine truth, restore the erring to the way of righteousness; it is ours to

¹ Manual of Intercessory Prayer.

bring them before Him, according to His own command.

This intercession is for those ‘admitted into the fellowship of Christ’s religion,’ who profess to follow Him, and wander rather through error of judgment than by wilful disobedience or careless indifference. We pray for them that, God guiding them, they may eschew—put away with unshrinking hand—whatever is contrary to their profession; that ‘as strangers and pilgrims they may abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.’¹

But this is not enough; Christ’s religion is not a system of negatives; we pray that they may ‘follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;’ all things suitable to the stranger whose home is in Heaven, to the pilgrim who seeks a better country, that is an heavenly; and what those things are we can only learn by God’s holy Word, illuminated by God’s Holy Spirit, whose light is pure, and whose way is perfect.

‘Pray one for another that ye may be healed;’² it is thus we bear our brethren before Him as literally and as truly as they, who in the days of His flesh, ‘brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments; and He healed them.’³

‘More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.

¹ 1 St. Peter, ii. 11. ² St. James, v. 16. ³ St. Matthew, iv. 24.

For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
 For so the whole round world is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.'¹

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men ; Grant unto Thy people, that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise ; that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

No word could better express the state of the wills and affections of sinful men than ‘unruly’ ; it is our boast that they are above the control of our fellow-creatures ; it is our plea that they are beyond our own ; we say that we cannot govern our feelings, though we may govern our actions ; that we cannot force ourselves to love what we dislike or to desire that which does not attract ; that the will is itself a master, the affections are spontaneous ; yet while we plead this, their ungovernable independence, as an excuse for loving the evil and hating the good, we plead it with a

¹ *Morte d'Arthur.*

sigh, confessing that there is some higher principle to which they ought to be subject, though in fact they are not ; we acknowledge that the man whose will and affections are unrestrained is not a perfect man ; his will does not tend to the highest good, his affections do not cleave to the holy and the pure ; we know by intuitive conviction that man was not created to be tossed hither and thither by every gust of passion, that the man whose will and affections own no ruler is a bad member of society. Where then is the lawful ruler ? It is vain to set up one portion of ourselves as the sovereign over another ; it is true that in our complex nature there are the higher and lower faculties and propensities ; that there is an authority which speaks within us of right and wrong, and that ought to control the inferior parts of our being ; but it is a delegated authority, and testifies of one above itself. The intellect cannot rule either the will or the affections, though it may tell us they are astray and impure ; conscience can tell us we are wrong, but it cannot make us right ; its authority exists, but its *power* is usurped by the unruly will. There is only One Who can truly govern us ; and our wisdom is to submit ourselves to Him, to return to our allegiance, to take His yoke upon us, and learn of Him Whose yoke is easy and Whose burden is light.

Man must be governed, not as a thing moved by a mechanism, but as a living will, ruled by -

stronger Living Will. This is beautifully illustrated in the oriental imagery of the Canticles, where the Church, the bride of Christ, is compared ‘to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots;’¹ the vigour and action and power and will not annihilated, but tamed, trained, governed, so that the very ornaments, the ‘chains of gold,’ and ‘rows of pearls,’ are the badges of subjection ; and this by a voluntary submission, by the training and discipline of the will. ‘Be ye not as the horse, whose mouth must be held by bit and bridle;’² do not require the continual pressure of the curb to keep you in your place ; ‘it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;’³ do not resist, do not linger, but run forward in the appointed course. The wild colt of the Pampas, when brought into the service of his master, man, loses none of his native energy ; but it is an energy governed by a superior being ; he moves freely, because he moves under a rule to which he submits himself ; and thus, to use the words of an ancient writer, ‘Ours is a liberty, but a liberty redeemed, over which Christ is the Governor.’ ‘His people are made *willing* in the day of His power.’

‘Our wills are ours, we know not how ;
Our wills are ours to make them Thine.’

We cannot submit them to a lifeless code of laws, still less to a selfish account of profit and loss ; but we can lay them down at the feet of Him ‘Who loved us and gave Himself (His own

¹ Canticles, i. 9, 10.

² Psalm xxxii. 9.

³ Acts, ix. 5.

self!) for us;¹ and we can ask Him to subdue us into obedience, and to conform us to His likeness. We can take our palpitating hearts to Him, and ask Him to ‘Grant us’ (not only to teach us and help us, but to put into us as a royal grant) ‘to love the thing which He commands, and to desire that which He doth promise.’ These two things we do not by nature; sinful man may outwardly obey, but he does not love God’s commands; but God can ‘write His law in the heart:’ he does not desire what God promises; but God can make that pure and holy land of promise more lovely in His sight than all the richest possessions or fairest joys of earth; God can take the unruly creature, and fill him with such love, of which obedience is the development, and such desire after things unseen, of which hope is the fruit, that the affections once wavering and wandering, may ‘surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found.’ ‘Surely fixed,’ and ‘true joys;’ let us contrast these ideas with the ‘sundry and manifold changes of the world,’ through which we are passing.

To ‘surely fix’ our hearts on anything that ends at the grave is to be ‘as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast;’² there are no true joys on earth except such joys—and blessed be His Name! they are many—as we can carry with us into His holy presence; joys that spring on earth to bloom for ever in the Paradise of God.

¹ Galatians, ii. 20.

² Proverbs, xxiii. 34.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

O Lord, from whom all good things do come; Grant to us Thy humble servants, that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

‘INSPIRATION;’ the word has only one meaning, though it has more than one application; it is the breath of God inhaled by man; as when ‘God *breathed* into his nostrils the *breath* of life, and man became a living soul;’ and as when again ‘He *breathed* on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.’

In its highest use it is that Inspiration of God by which ‘all Scripture is given,’¹ by which ‘holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost’² to declare the revelation of God to the world; that Inspiration by which the Apostles spoke and the Evangelists wrote for our learning; the nature and manner of which could only be known to those who received it. Men boldly discuss the question of the mode of Inspiration, as if we ought to understand how it was given or recognized as such, while we must acknowledge that it would be impossible for any one person to convey to another precisely by what cadence or intonation he discerned a familiar

¹ 2 Timothy, iii. 16.

² 2 St. Peter, i. 21.

voice; it would be a transparent absurdity to say that a voice was unheard because the hearer could not or did not explain to others how he recognized it as the voice of his friend; it is a far greater absurdity to expect such an explanation of *how* the utterance of the Divine mind came to those whom He employed to convey His message to man in human and intelligible language. Even they who spake or wrote did not understand all that the Spirit of God put into their minds to declare or record; even they 'searched diligently, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify';¹ and yet men, unlearned and ignorant in the things of God, suppose it ought all to be explained to them and brought to the level of their comprehension. Whatever individuals may do, the Church makes no such presumptuous attempt; she declares that God *has* 'caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning,' but does not pretend to define how it was done.

In another application, the word Inspiration signifies a holy influence within the soul; an influence not coming, as many of His gracious gifts and influences do come, through a human medium or external means, but a movement within the soul of prayer or of holy aspiration, which is as it were from ourselves, none the less our own because it is inhaled from above. In our common speech the word Inspiration has

¹ 1 St. Peter, i. 10, 11.

become so fixed to the first application, and it is so necessary to keep *that* apart from every other and to give it a title peculiar to itself, that it is dangerous to make frequent use of the term in any other sense. It occurs, I think, only twice in the Prayer Book, and each time in connection with the thoughts: ‘Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit;’ and here, ‘Grant that by Thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good.’ We lately joined in prayer that He would defend us from the evil thoughts which do assault and hurt the soul; here we pray Him to give us good thoughts in their place. Now ‘good thoughts’ are not exclusively thoughts about passages of Scripture, or the state of the soul, or eternity, or the bliss of Heaven, or directly on religious subjects: every kind and gentle and grateful thought, every noble, pure, elevated thought, every clear, honest, truthful thought, is a good thought; our thoughts concerning the circumstances of daily life, even about its trifles, must be good or bad just as decidedly and distinctly as our words and actions. We dare not say that such good thoughts are ‘inspired,’ because that word in our recognized use of it implies a direct and therefore infallible communication from God; but we may say that from Him as the only Source of Light and Love, comes every thought that has enlightened or ennobled or comforted the human family; from Him in a sense even more close

and intimate than that merciful guiding of the external life which we implore ‘to enable us to perform the same.’ That guiding comes through many channels, is moulded by various hands ; even as in the forming of the Tabernacle, ‘every one whose heart stirred him up,’ ‘as many as were willing-hearted brought their offerings ;’ but ‘Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit of God to devise,’ and arrange and think for the accomplishing of the work of God. In the Christian character, the union between thinking and doing, between good thoughts and good acts, is indissoluble ; of this the Epistle for the day (St. James, i.) especially reminds us. He that would disunite them deceiveth his own self.

ASCENSION DAY.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens ; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

THIS blessed festival is the culminating point of Christian joy. Our adored Master never separates Himself from His people ; through the whole history of Incarnation runs the assurance

'Because I live ye shall live also ;' and in this, its glorious triumph, we are not forgotten, and in it our dearest interests are bound up ; yet we may, in contemplating this great event, stand for a while apart, as it were, from self, forget our own concerns, leave self behind, and rejoice for and with Him ; rejoice that He Who humbled Himself unto death, even to the death of the Cross, for us men and for our salvation, is now restored to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Yes, let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord ; we can here make our boast in the Lord ; rejoice in His joy ; give thanks unto Him for His great glory ; we can bless God that 'He hath raised up His Son Jesus,' that our Master is by the right hand of God exalted ; that Jesus the Son of God is passed into the Heavens without one stain or trace of what He endured for our sakes ; nay, more, with a glory and a bliss intensified and heightened by those sufferings ; for in man's redemption He has gained 'the joy that was set before Him.' We may take up the exulting strain that rang from the harp of prophecy, and which lay silent in the records of the Evangelic history until our Great High Priest entered into the Holiest, and the triumphant song burst forth, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.'

Our Great High Priest has passed into the Heavens, and there He ever liveth to make intercession for us; *now* to appear in the presence of God for us; that *now*, which includes the history of the Church militant, had its commencement then; but the prayer for the day wisely limits our thoughts to one view of this, the greatest subject of human or angelic contemplation, and recalls our Lord's words, 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;' 'Grant that like as we do believe Thy only begotten Son hath ascended into the Heavens, so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell.'

Anyone who has watched the dying hour of a beloved saint will remember the incommunicable feeling when we laid the lifeless head on the pillow, knowing that *he* still lived in a brighter and fuller life; that the fading and suffering and lingering and dying was past, and the true life begun; '*neither can they die any more*,' in that hour this world appeared distanced, and all its concerns seemed like dreams and shadows, or the babbling of a distant river, in which our own grief mingled as a sound far off and trifling; while the world on which the spirit had entered, and to which in heart and mind we followed its flight, became the great reality; the golden doors that received him seemed open for us too; we saw the glory which exalteth, and almost shared its brightness: and thus it is that as we believe

our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the Heavens we may also thither ascend, not with a passing emotion, but with the quiet habit of a steadfast faith.

To resume the duties of life we must in a measure withdraw our thoughts from the friend who has passed into another state of existence, because he has ceased from this world and its concerns; and in tender mercy God fills up the chasm and enables us to walk calmly and cheerfully the solitary path: but not so with regard to Him Who is the centre of all life, to Whom belong earth's simplest as well as its severest duties; to Whom belong earth's affections and earth's smiles as well as its tears; we need never withdraw our steadfast gaze from Him in order to fulfil our daily task; but go through all as in His sight; see all things from His point of view; dwell with Him 'continually' by secret meditation; by that Holy Communion which He gives as a link between the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual; and by a participation in His present work of intercession. Wonderful thought! When we pray for others we share the work and enter into the mind of the One Mediator, and draw nearer to Him than we could ever draw to the closest human friend.

'Then shall we see Thee as Thou art,
For ever fixed in no unfruitful gaze.'

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.

O God the King of glory, who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in Heaven ; We beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless ; but send to us Thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

THERE is not in modern poetry a touch more true to nature than that which describes the cherished lady of Burleigh withering under her own consciousness of inferiority to the object of her love. When one beloved in close intimacy and companionship is raised to a position we cannot share ; when a wife sees her husband commanding armies, leading a procession on which she can only gaze ; when a mother sees her son guiding the councils of the state, a leader among men, a feeling mingles with the joy, as if they were less our own ; we want them to come back to us from their lofty state, to assure us in familiar converse that they are the same to us as ever. Far stronger is this feeling, and mingled with elements of pain, when the separation is one not of position but of mind ; when the rustic welcomes home his boy, crowned with the honours of literature, of which he himself knows nothing, and the shy

sister offers a doubtful greeting to the man of whose genius she only knows as some wondrous power that can command the world's admiration. What is there in common? A sense of estrangement chills the fire-side circle; the great man, the hero, the scholar, what can they say worthy of his attention? A painful silence falls on their hearts, with a sense of distance though so near, for they cannot speak of the great things with which he is familiar, and which of course occupy all his thoughts. What can break the spell? One look of love, of that love which is higher and deeper than all mental gifts; how much higher and deeper than all earthly distinctions! One household word, the utterance of a familiar name, the recognition of some common want; such words as these dissolve the frozen surface, and the stream of home-born happiness flows brightly in the sunshine.

So it was after the Resurrection, when the disciples 'believed not for joy;' and such words were those: 'Mary;' and 'Children, have ye any meat?' And so in the great event of the Ascension, such a sense of *distance* must have fallen on their hearts when they saw 'the Son of Man ascend up where He was before,' as the cloud received Him out of their sight, and they stood gazing up into Heaven; it was answered by the angel's message, 'This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven':—this

same Jesus;—they heard, and they were comforted: and returned to Jerusalem, and went up into an upper room, (whence their weary eyes could still look up into the clear expanse where the bright cloud had been,) and they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, as men that wait for their Lord.

But of that other separation—not disparity of place, but of character and mind and taste and knowledge—that sense of separation which makes the soul shrink into itself, and feel, ‘He is all to me, but I can be nothing to Him, nothing but an object of compassion ;’ that blighting consciousness of hopeless distance—that needs a consolation more direct, more intimate, more personal, than even the blessed hope of His glorious appearing ; He will come again clothed with majesty and power ; and ‘When He Who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory ;’ we shall be made like Him, seeing Him as He is, for He shall change this vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious Body : the future is full of light ; but meanwhile ? In comparison with eternity it is but for a moment, yet to human perception is very, very long ; our life here is but like a vapour, yet it is a thick vapour that often enfolds us in darkness ; and we think how happy were they who saw Him in the days of His great humility ; oh that I might now touch the hem of His garment ; oh that I might see Him stand still and ask, What wilt thou ? oh that I might

hear Him say, ‘Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;’ oh that I might clasp His knees like the sisters of Bethany, or wash His feet with my tears; then could I pour out my heart before Him and tell Him all my sorrows; He is in Heaven and I upon earth, therefore let my words be few; He is in glory, and I am a worm of the dust; and a future hope is not enough; we want something *now*—something to compensate for His bodily human presence. Then is wrung from the heart the cry, ‘We beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless, but send Thy Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us to the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before; exalt us by the Spirit, so that we may in heart and mind thither ascend and with Him continually dwell;’ let that love be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, which sweeps away in its majestic power all intervals of space and time; exalt us into such holy sympathy with Him as will enable us to rejoice that He is gone to the Father, though we see Him no more.

The love of Christ embraces all time; we often think of it in the past and future; it is also present. ‘Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, but into Heaven itself, *now* to appear in the presence of God for us;’ and to that blessed *now* the services of this day especially direct us.

The Church stands as Elisha did when his master had gone up out of his sight; but the

mantle has been dropped upon her, and wrapped in its folds she can hold on her way; with its power she can part the dark waters of sorrow or of death. We are living under the dispensation of Christ's High Priesthood, and are now as the people who waited in the outer tabernacle, while within the Holy of Holies the sacrifice was accepted, and the incense presented; and soon our High Priest will come out and bless the people; *now* He ever liveth to make intercession for us. We want sympathy with Him; 'If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice because I go to the Father;' and that sympathy is the result of faith wrought by the Holy Spirit. We are no longer comfortless if He brings us near by drawing upward our affections, for instead of bewailing ourselves in the dust, we can rejoice with our Lord that God the King of Glory has exalted His Son Jesus Christ with great glory into His Kingdom in Heaven; we can give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness, whatever we may be; we can, even in oblivion of self, take up the note of sacred triumph and say, 'We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory:' and thus it is we may learn somewhat of the meaning of the expression, 'He hath raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

WHIT-SUNDAY.

[‘Why do you call this festival Whit Sunday?

‘Partly from the glorious light of Heaven which was this day sent down upon the earth from the Father of lights; but principally because this day, being one of the stated times for baptism in the ancient Church, those who were baptized put on white garments, as types of that spiritual purity received in baptism, and which they were obliged to preserve in the future course of their lives. When the discipline of the Church began to be settled, baptism was confined to two solemn and stated times of the year, Easter and Whitsuntide, including the intermediate space of fifty days. Easter was appointed in memory of Christ’s death and resurrection, correspondent to which are the two parts of the Christian life, dying unto sin and rising again to newness of life; Whitsuntide, in memory of the Apostles being then baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and of their having themselves baptized three thousand souls.’—*Nelson on the Festivals.*]

God, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

WE may form some estimate of the value of the gift which this day commemorates, by considering that which it replaced.

There were ‘the Cherubim of glory shadowing

the Mercy-seat ;¹ there was the cloud filling the Temple, ‘for the glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord ;² there was the Urim and the Thummim, whereby counsel was asked and given;³ the manifest High Priesthood, mediating between the worshipper and his God ; the gorgeous ceremonial ; the visibly accepted sacrifice ; the audibly uttered revelation ; the voice of prophecy ; the visible manifestation of the Deity : yet all this was to be swept away, and replaced by the dispensation of the Spirit. And still farther, there was the bodily presence, and the personal teaching, and the daily tokens of love, of the Lord Jesus, as He went in and out among His disciples ; God manifest in the flesh lived among men, ready to solve every question, to read and answer every difficulty, to know every thought ; ready to comfort and to direct ; and beyond all this, He was their Friend, a title which includes far more than a combination of all kindly offices ; and yet He said to them, ‘It is expedient for you (*you, John and Peter,* not merely for the Church in after ages) that I go away : for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send Him unto you.’⁴ The Holy Spirit, in His personal indwelling, was to be poured forth from the glorified manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ ; ‘The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet

¹ Exodus, xxv. ² Exodus, xl. 85 ; 1 Kings, viii. 11, &c.

³ Numbers, xxvii. 21. ⁴ St. John, xvi. 7.

glorified.'¹ 'He ascended up on high that He might receive gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them;'² He must leave them and go up to the Father ere that gift should descend; and He said that it was expedient for them that He should do so. When He takes away our nearest and dearest, we may believe that He can fill the chasm; but to take away Himself! do we not in our secret hearts feel that they who shared His friendship upon earth enjoyed a higher privilege than ours? This is because we do not use the blessing He has sent to us; we do not seek, and therefore do not find, the Holy Spirit's presence in such measure as to be to us individually more close, more inwrought than was the bodily presence of the Saviour to His disciples while He walked on earth.

The twofold work of the Holy Spirit is the object of this prayer; His illumination and His consolation. 'When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth;' the disciples often understood not when Jesus Himself spoke to them; the veil was on their hearts; but 'whom He teaches He makes prone to learn:' 'He shall glorify me,' saith the Saviour, 'for He shall take of Mine and shew it unto you.' 'The Light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not;' but the Spirit opens the eyes of the understanding to behold Him Who is indeed the Light. When Jesus spoke to them of

¹ St. John, vii. 39.

² Psalm lxviii. 18.

comfort, they questioned, ‘How is it, Lord ? How wilt Thou manifest Thyself to us ?’ But when the Comforter comes into any heart, He sheds the love of God abroad in its inmost foldings, by enabling it to receive the words of Jesus. ‘The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’

A right judgement, and a holy comfort ! may God grant us these gifts ! If we truly seek them while we utter this prayer, this will be ‘a white day in our lives.’

TRINITY SUNDAY.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us Thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity ; We beseech Thee, that Thou wouldest keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

HERETOFORE all the festivals of the Christian year are commemorative ; this alone has the object of bringing annually before the Church not an event or a person, but an article of belief, or rather the fundamental dogma of Christianity. To use the words of Bishop Sparrow, ‘Not-

withstanding on each day and especially on Sundays the Church celebrates the praises of the Trinity in her doxologies, hymns, creeds, &c.; yet the wisdom of the Church thought it meet that such a mystery as this, though part of the meditation of each day, should be the chief object of one, and this to be the day. For no sooner had our Lord ascended into Heaven, and God's Holy Spirit descended upon the Church, than there ensued the notice of the glorious and incomprehensible Trinity which before that time was not so clearly known. The Church therefore, having solemnized in an excellent order all the high feasts of our Lord, and after that of the descent of God's Spirit upon the Apostles, thought it a thing most seasonable to conclude these great solemnities with a festival of full, special, and express service to the Holy and blessed Trinity.'

The importance of this periodical observance increases in value now, when all that is beyond the measure of human intellect is questioned or deemed incredible, even among those who still call themselves Christians; and the spirit of this prayer is full of meaning especially applicable to the present time. We take our stand upon an undoubted truth; we give to God the glory of having revealed it to us and of having taught us to believe it; and we ask God to keep us steadfast in this belief: there is no hesitation here; no uncertain sound as to the doctrine taught; no

readiness to be convinced that what we hold to-day as eternal truth may to-morrow prove an error; no doubt whether those who deny it, those who differ from us concerning it, may be more right than ourselves. No; with the firm grasp of a living faith we lay hold upon what God has revealed, and beseech Him never to let us lose our hold.

There is no attempt to explain the mystery of the Eternal Trinity, or to bring it by illustration down to our capacity; woe be to the man whose belief is limited by his comprehension, or whose hope can extend no farther than eye hath seen or ear heard; is it not obvious that such a faith, like such a hope, can be no larger than the mind that conceives it? it must be bounded by human experience, and cannot reach to the things which God hath revealed by His Spirit.

‘Truth will always seem deeper, broader, higher, the nearer we approach it; the more we converse with the Eternal, the less we shall dream of comprehending it. But does not our unrest come from this—a desire to hold in the hollow of our hand that which holds us?’¹

In the portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle of this day,² the mind is placed in a position of holy wonder; a scene is opened to our gaze which we dare not presume to bring down to our own level, or to say we fully understand: like the Apostle, we should fall as dead in the

¹ Maurice.

² Revelation, iv.

presence of such glory, instead of discussing its veracity in our presumptuous scepticism, or propping it up, Uzzah like, by our presumptuous praise. We catch glimpses of a glory awful and unspeakable, in which a threefold glory is expressed; and we adore in silence. But the holy Gospel¹ comes down to us, and shews us that side of the mystery which is turned earthward and lighted up for our instruction; not revealing the incommunicable glory of the Eternal Trinity, but their threefold and united offices in regard to man; for ‘by Him’ (the Eternal Son) ‘we have access by One Spirit unto the Father.’ In simplest form of speech, ‘Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, the Strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping of Thy commandments we may please Thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THERE is no character in which the Church more frequently claims and worships God than that of

¹ St. John, iii.

the Strength of His people. ‘O Lord, my Strength and my Salvation.’ ‘The Lord is my Strength.’

Why do we so cling to Him in this character? Because of the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Him; and it is only in proportion as we try to do ‘good things’ that we are conscious of this weakness; for then we are in a state of antagonism or conflict with the evil tendencies within and around us, which puts our power to the test; it is ‘when I would do good that I find evil is present with me.’ As long as we float along the current of our own inclination and the world’s opinion we may see external obstacles, but we shall never be conscious of the difficulty or the deficiency within; it is when the battle begins in earnest, when as Christ’s faithful soldiers we manfully fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, that we learn to cry with King Jehoshaphat, ‘We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee.’¹

There are several Hebrew words translated by the one word ‘strength;’ though with many shades of difference, they group themselves under two ideas—that of power as an outward defence, and that of power imparted or infused. In the first, we find shelter in Him, as a Rock, a fortress, a mighty Hand; ‘the Name of the Lord is a

¹ 2 Chronicles, xx. 12.

strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe :¹ in the second, we receive of His fullness, and are ourselves made ‘strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,’ through the strength imparted from the Vine to the branch, the strength which He infuses, and which is ‘made perfect in weakness.’ ‘The Lord will be the place of repairs,’ or ‘harbour of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.’² ‘Will He plead against me with His great power?’ saith Job; ‘Nay, but He would put strength in me.’³ But He is not thus the strength of all His creatures; it is truly as this Collect says, of all those who put their trust in Him; it is by trust or faith we enter into the hiding place of His power, instead of standing outside as rebels against it; it is by the same trust or faith that we are made partakers of His holy strength. We are not weak to do evil, because evil is natural to us, and evil is small and limited; but we are very weak to do good, because good is contrary to our fallen nature, and good is infinite; and the faintest ray of real good is of God; even as the beam broken in the rill is yet part of the glorious sun. It is in keeping His commandments both in will and deed we are to please Him; the Epistle for the day (1 St. John, iv. 7.) shows us the state of the will when the heart is filled with His love; while the story in the Gospel (St. Luke, xvi. 19.) reminds us that our love must not be only in word

¹ Proverbs, xviii. 10. ² Joel, iii. 16. (*margin.*) ³ Job, xxiii. 6.

and in tongue, but in *deed* and in truth : it puts powerfully the question, ‘ Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ? ’¹

‘ That we may please Thee both in will and deed.’ This is a wonderful expression—‘ to please God.’ Crouching in conscious guilt, and trembling in conscious insignificance, dare we think it possible that such a creature can please God ? Yes ; for the expression is an inspired one : ‘ The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him ; ’ ‘ walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing ; ’ ‘ ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God.’ ‘ Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.’ As surely as we can displease Him by breaking His commandments in will or deed, so surely we can please Him in keeping them ; and there is no difficulty attaching to the possible idea of giving Him pleasure, which does not equally attach to the acknowledged truth that we can offend and displease Him ; yet it is difficult to raise the mind to the grandeur of such a thought ; impossible, if we attempt to look upon God otherwise than as He is revealed in Jesus Christ ; but in Him, by a voluntary approximation to the range of our conception, He shows us that as He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, so He can rejoice in our sanctification ; He makes it plain that it is possible for us to give

¹ 1 St. John, iii. 17.

pleasure to our Redeemer. ‘The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing.’¹ What a hope is this; with a motive so sublime, well might the Apostle say, ‘The love of Christ constraineth us.’

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O Lord, who never failst to help and govern them whom Thou dost bring up in Thy steadfast fear and love; Keep us, we beseech Thee, under the protection of Thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of Thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIS prayer is especially appropriate to those who, in infancy baptized into Jesus Christ, have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; brought up by Him through the instrumentality of parents and teachers and pastors. The glad tidings of great joy have not to them, as to a converted heathen, the effect of novelty; they have been brought up in the habitual acknowledgment that ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life:’ this Gospel of

¹ Zephaniah, iii. 17.

the kingdom they have always known as a historical fact. Now every privilege has its attendant danger, and the fearful danger connected with the blessing of early religious instruction is indifference; that indifference which is the result of passive habit; the danger that the grand truths of Christianity may become to be reckoned by us like those daily gifts of light and air of which we are almost unconscious receptacles instead of grateful recipients. Passive habits as surely wear out their influence as active ones increase and confirm it; if we do not *use* them, lay hold on them, act on them, we become as deaf to the invitations of the Gospel as the ear becomes to the church going bell when it is not recognized as a summons to prayer; it strikes on the ear unperceived; the most startling announcements, the most appalling threatenings, as well as the sweetest promises, may by habitual disregard lose all meaning, all power to move or influence the affections; the heart may become deaf alike to the trumpet of judgment, and to the golden bells which proclaim that our High Priest ever liveth. It is not true that ‘he has no hope who never had a fear,’ but it is true that an indifferent or careless assent is not a living faith; that the absence of all doubt or fear may arise from the absence of all enquiry or anxiety; and therefore it behoves us most earnestly to pray for and to cultivate ‘a perpetual fear and love of His Holy Name.’

Irreverence is the most conspicuous evil of the present day, extending from our conduct towards earthly superiors to our conduct towards the Most High God ; and to this also an early familiarity with sacred things, if it be not sanctified, has a tendency. It is for those who have been instructed in Christian doctrine, and who come to join themselves afresh to the Lord in a perpetual covenant,¹ that the chief Pastors of our Church call on the people to pray, ‘Fill them, O Lord, with the spirit of Thy holy fear, now and for ever.’²

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to hear us ; and grant that we, to whom Thou hast given a hearty desire to pray, may by Thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A HEARTY desire to pray is indeed a gift of God the Holy Ghost, and a gift that needs daily renewing. The reluctance of the unconverted man to prayer is quite natural ; for as he does not recognize God as his benefactor or believe that prayer is heard or answered, it must be to him a wearisome ceremony ; but it is a fact, no less marvellous than grievous, that even the true

¹ Jeremiah, l. 5.

² Confirmation Service.

Christian, who ‘believes that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,’ yet continues to find prayer his most difficult though most delightful duty; and oftentimes is unable to say with truth that he has even a hearty desire to pray.

This is the language of Coleridge, and many will acknowledge its truth: ‘I do not reckon the most solemn faith in God as a real object the most arduous act of the reason and the will; Oh no! it is to pray, to pray as God would have us; this is what at times makes me turn cold to my soul. Believe me, to pray with all your heart and strength, with the reason and with the will; to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice and verily do the thing He pleaseth thereon—this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian’s warfare upon earth. Teach us to pray, O Lord!’

All the blessings that in all the Christian centuries have been poured upon the earth in answer to the daily offering up by its inhabitants of the Lord’s Prayer, are to be traced back to one simple petition, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’¹

Almost the last words of a dying pastor were these: ‘Pray much, that you may be taught to pray more.’ The hearty desire to pray must find expression in fervent prayer that He will farther teach us how to pray; ‘for we know not what we

¹ St. Luke, xi. 1.

should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered ; and He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the Will of God.'¹

'Can thine or my groanings be called unutterable, when there are often none, when they are often cold ? But because there is no day, no moment, in which the saints supplicate not God, one more one less fervently, and all make one Dove ; hence the unutterable groanings, namely the groanings of each for all, which profit all them who are set in the body of Christ.'²

The very difficulty increases the necessity for 'watching unto prayer ;' for though it be our highest enjoyment and privilege, it is none the less our duty towards God, and a necessity to ourselves—a necessity to the life of the soul, as breath is to the life of the body.

¹ Romans, viii. 26, 27.

² Bishop Andrewes.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy ; Increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy ; that, Thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal ; Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Amen.

EVERY word in this beautiful prayer breathes the strong and patient spirit of a Christian pilgrim, walking with God towards that ‘city which hath foundations.’ There is the expression of a firm reliance in the address to God as ‘The Protector of all who trust in Him, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy ;’ but with Whom and in Whom there is found all strength and holiness. ‘Increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy ;’ this is not the language of one to whom Divine mercy is a new or uncertain gift ; it is the cry in which God delights, using the mercy received as a plea to ask for more ; the filial cry, ‘Thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water ;’¹ it is only to Him the plea can be made, ‘Give more, because Thou hast given much ;’ ‘Give me the second grace, that I receive not the first grace in vain ;’ but our Father in Heaven delights in pouring out the riches of His love ; He giveth

¹ Judges, i. 15.

liberally and upbraideth not. His love is an exhaustless fountain, not poured upon the flinty rock, but drawn out by the longing heart, which receives it as showers on the dry ground. ‘Increase and multiply;’ His mercy, though all existing in the fountain of eternal love, and all flowing through the one channel of the Incarnation, yet comes to us ‘multiplied,’ as it were, in the various acts of loving-kindness; broken up, so as to bring it within our perception, into those various acts of grace and providence which remind us that the fountain is one of ever-living fullness; ‘multiplied,’ as the dew on the tender herb, each drop perfect in itself. ‘The grace of God,’ says Jeremy Taylor, ‘fills the furrows of the heart; and as the capacity increases, itself grows up in equal degrees, and never suffers any emptiness or dissatisfaction, but carries content and fullness all the way; and the degrees of augmentation are not steps and near approaches to satisfaction, but *increasings of the capacity*. The soul is satisfied all the way; but it can lay hold of more, is more receptive of felicities.’

The leading idea of this comprehensive prayer is found in the words, ‘pass through;’ here is the secret of the Christian’s life; he is not at home in this world, he is on his way to ‘a better country, that is a heavenly;’ this is not his rest, nor would he desire it to be so; but its transitory character endears its refreshments as well as

lightens its burdens ; for we can cheerfully bear a pain or a want that is only for a little while, and we can enjoy in a passing way many things which if we seek rest and satisfaction in them will prove hollow and bitter. The flowers of the field are lovely, and as we pass through the meadows they afford us a pure joy ; but if we found ourselves stationed in a flowery mead, with no shelter, no food but these, and looked to them as our only sustenance, we should turn from their innocent beauty in pain and disappointment ; and thus it is with the enjoyment of things temporal ; to those whose Home and whose hope is above—

‘Earth’s common paths are strewn all o’er
With flowers of pensive hope, the wreath of man forgiven.’

‘Passing through ;’ we should tread lightly the broken paths of this world, ‘like as a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether.’¹ Passing through ; not taking up our abode among the things of time, and saying, ‘To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant ; I have goods laid up for many years.’ Passing through ; accepting thankfully each day’s portion of sunshine and shadow ; not dwelling in the earthly past, as though our life were buried in an earthly grave ; nor dwelling in an earthly future by laying out plans for God to work by ; but taking the present just as He sends it, and walking with Him towards the everlasting Home, where ‘we shall be satisfied.’

¹ Canticles, ii. 17.

Our holiness and our happiness are just in proportion to the degree in which we possess this pilgrim spirit. If we are Christians, we are passing through things temporal so as finally not to lose the things eternal: it is our true position; but often we fail to realize it; and if we forget it we are false to ourselves and to God.

Satisfaction is not promised in our present state, where we live by faith and rejoice in hope; 'I shall be *satisfied* when I awake up after Thy likeness;' not till then: but the step of the pilgrim may be light and firm, and his song may breathe the deepest joy of hope, while he is passing on to the things eternal, with God for his Ruler and Guide.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

To a careless glance it seems surprising that so large a portion of God's Book is occupied by history and biography; that He with whom the nations are counted as the small dust in the balance, and who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, should inspire His servants to give a

faithful record of the rise and fall of kingdoms, the conflicts of political agitation, the victory or defeat of warriors: doubtless if we were left to our own judgment, we should fancy, as more fitting, a revelation dealing exclusively with the things we call spiritual and eternal; but this is because we see not the links that bind into unity the whole of God's government; we are slow to recognize Him as the Ruler of all things in Heaven and earth; and slow to believe, where we cannot trace, the connection between the present and the future existence, between the earthly and the spiritual, the temporal and eternal. But the historical books of Holy Scripture lay claim to the whole world as God's world, and shew us that the wide circle of human affairs moves within His control, and is ordered by Him in reference to that inner circle which is composed of those who bow to His sovereignty, obey His rule, and are emphatically His chosen people—‘His peculiar people.’ Thus to take a single example: the Almighty addresses the proud Assyrian conqueror as ‘The rod of Mine anger,’ and says of his vast armies, ‘The staff in their hand is My indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so; but it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off nations not a few; . . . for he saith,

By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent. . . . Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith ? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it ? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself as if it were no wood.¹

This chapter (Isaiah, x.) compared with the political events to which it refers, together with Jeremiah, li., and Ezekiel, xxix., affords a key to the study of what is called profane history ; shewing that consciously or unconsciously, willingly or against their will, men are working out the purposes of God, though often, nay most frequently, those purposes are far above out of our sight. The wheel within a wheel of Ezekiel's vision illustrates the truth that the movements of the world are influenced by the movement of the inner circle, and that the widest national events have their bearing on individual circumstances, and individual circumstances influence personal character ; so that the living spirit of man's immortality is concerned in what seem only the events of this world's career ; and that career is moving straight forward to fulfil the object and purpose of Him whose eyes are upon all the ways of the sons of men. It is quite true that the grandest political events, if they ended with the rise or fall of human ambition, would be of less importance than the silent work of grace in the

¹ Isaiah, x.

lowest heart, the one being a thing of time, the other of eternity; but it is not so; God has not thus severed the different parts of His government; the events which we call political 'fall out for the furtherance of the Gospel,' or for the confirmation of the faith, though it be tried in the furnace. We behold the 'sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear;' we see the seething, tossing, raging tide of human affairs, and we do not understand to what each billow is tending; but we know that as the tide came in yesterday it will come in to-day, and through the Scripture records of similar convulsions we are permitted to glance 'within the veil,' and there to be assured that He has placed a barrier which they cannot pass; that 'the Heavens do rule,' and that all things are under the control of Him who knoweth the end from the beginning; and thus recognizing Him as King of kings and Lord of lords, we beseech Him 'so to order the course of this world, that His Church may joyfully serve Him in all godly quietness.'

We are not thankful as we ought to be for the quietness we now enjoy; we have become accustomed to it, and take it as a matter of course that all religious privileges and advantages are pressed on our acceptance, that each Lord's Day finds our assembled thousands worshipping in peace and security, not even disturbed by a taunting word; sometimes there is even a tone

of murmuring against our mercies, as though the purity of the Church were injured by this prosperity; a complaint that now there is no test of fidelity, such as times of persecution would present; no opportunity of proving who are His and who are not. Alas! alas! for our foolish pride and self-confidence!

'How wouldst thou hang upon the cross,
To whom a weary hour is loss?
Or how the thorns and scourging brook,
Who shrinkest from a scornful look?'

'If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, then what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?' Let us have no ambitious desires after a severer discipline than God appoints us, and let us well profit by our present discipline, which is to live in the world as not of the world, and to rise above the fascinations of a world that smiles upon us.

To many the attractions of a life of ease afford a deeper test than the terrors of a season of persecution; self-indulgence is their danger; and to them troublous times would be rather a lower degree of discipline than the daily struggle to resist what wins the affections and charms the taste; sometimes they have recourse to ungrateful wishes after the excitement of trial and persecution, as the Romanist has to the knotted scourge, thus taking their education into their own hands

instead of leaving it in the hands of God, who can send pain enough when He sees it to be the best medicine: but there are also many who do yield to the allurements of a time of peace, so as almost to forget that this is not our rest, and to pass with unheeding eye the cross that surely belongs to every follower of the Crucified; they can only offer half of this prayer; they do desire that the course of this world may be peaceably ordered, but it is not for the purpose of serving God joyfully in godly quietness. ‘Then had the Churches rest and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied;’ but was this the rest of indolence? the repose of self-pleasing? let the Acts of the Apostles testify.

There can be little doubt that if tribulation or persecution should arise for the word’s sake, many who talk well and are quick at discerning motes in their brother’s eye would turn away from the profession they now make; but among those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, there would be as faithful martyrs as in the early days of Christianity. His Spirit is not taken away because His Providence is tenderly sheltering us; our present peace is not a snare, but a token of His tender mercy, the shelter of His overshadowing wings; and those who now serve Him joyfully in godly quietness, surrounded by domestic love and social refinement, and all the gentle courtesies

of life, will be equally prepared, when trial comes, to rejoice that they are accounted worthy to suffer shame for His sake.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding ; Pour into our hearts such love toward Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If the promise were that God would give to His people all that eye hath seen or ear heard, all that hath entered into the heart of man, there would still be an aching void in the soul, utterly unsatisfied by such an anticipation. The longing of the soul is after the Infinite, the Eternal ; ‘My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ;’ nothing lower will satisfy its true aspirations ; according to the well-known words of Saint Augustine, ‘Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they return to Thee.’

The bliss which He has prepared for those that love Him must ever surpass all our knowledge, and even all our definite desire ; there must hang around it to human perception that vagueness

which bounds the limits of vision, however far that vision may extend ; in our present state—perhaps, because of our creature state, for ever—we must realize the seeming contradiction, ‘to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge ;’ to know, that our nearest approach, our keenest perception, serves but to unveil to our consciousness more of the depth and height unapproachable and unperceived.

‘ All experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.’

We know that yearning sense of the beautiful which is widened rather than filled, nourished, but never satisfied, by all we can now behold ; that vague conception of something we see not, which elevates the spirit in the contemplation of the ocean, which makes the grandest outline of a boundary less magnificent than the consciousness of a vast unseen ; that radiant mystery which hangs on all things distant and above our grasp ; which hangs around the very words ‘eternal glory ;’ words which express an idea that none can attempt to define, and to which we attach an interpretation more or less bright and elevated in proportion to the glory we *can* imagine, and our capability of farther shadowing forth the conception of some vast ideal, altogether above and beyond ourselves or anything that we can now appreciate.

If we were to fix our eyes only on what we

can understand, we should soon cease to use them ; for the microscope tells of unthought of wonders in things that appeared altogether within or beneath our observation, and the telescope never brings the eye into contact with one point of distant radiance, without also revealing depths of light beyond and beyond again : and thus it is with the spiritual vision ; the more we know, the more we shall perceive to exist beyond our knowledge. If the things that God hath prepared were within the grasp of human understanding, they must be within the limits of human experience ; but in fact they are altogether akin to a state of purity and bliss of which we can form little beyond a negative conception—

‘The purest height to which our fancy goes,
Is but the mere negation of our woes.’

No sin, no pain, no death, no tears, no sorrow—all negatives ; but on the level produced by the filling up of all these valleys of weeping, God creates a temple of holy joy, of which we can form no distinct image. Are we therefore to turn away from the contemplation of our purchased inheritance ? are we to cease to lift up our eyes to the everlasting hills, because there are pinnacles of glory hidden within the clouds ? because, while we see the outline, we are not able to trace all the beauty it encloses ? Is our future Home the place which Jesus went to prepare for us, a vague and shadowy realm of which we must dream rather than think ? Not so ; all we are now capable of

comprehending is revealed ; all that comes within our present capacity we can study and know as plainly and as assuredly as we can the things of earth ; but we are not to suppose the glory is exhausted because we see no more ; nor are we to be startled away from one revealed truth because beside it there lies a shadow which we fail to penetrate. Yes ; within the sacred outline of pure love and holy obedience, imagination may paint her fairest pictures, ever remembering that she never can attain to the brightness of the reality.

The bliss of Heaven, as the place and state where we shall be ever with the Lord, can only be imagined by the loving heart ; we picture to ourselves that bliss just in proportion as we here love Him above all things, and enjoy communion with Him, and find His service perfect freedom ; even now, while yet we see Him not, the believer rejoices in his Saviour ‘with joy *unspeakable* and full of glory ;’ how then express, even in the silent language of definite thought, the bliss of seeing Him as He is, and being made like unto Him ? The bliss of Heaven as a social state, where the joy of each will be multiplied by the joy of all, can only be appreciated by anticipation in so far as we now love our brethren and rejoice with them that do rejoice ; but it were a poor and shallow friendship that could find a full utterance ; in true love the heart seems to gain fresh and fresh motives for taking the beloved one to its

very centre ; surely then the future joy of ‘loving as we never loved before’ must pass man’s understanding. Love is full of aspiration, even while it rejoices in its present possession.

‘Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ;’ it is not yet made apparent, because we have not powers to apprehend it ; ‘but we *know* that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’ The blessedness of that vision of being made like Him, this ‘vile body fashioned like unto His glorious body,’ *exceeds* all that we can desire ; but do our desires tend towards it ? is it towards this that the longing and yearning of our spirits stretcheth forth ? does our earnest expectation wait for the manifestation of the sons of God ? It must be so if we love God above all things ; and this supreme love is a present reality, of the existence or absence of which there can be no uncertainty. ‘We love Him because He first loved us ;’ and more and more that precious love is poured into the heart that accepts it, deeper and deeper channels opening for it to flow in.

‘Oh then the glory and the bliss,
When all that pained or seemed amiss,
Shall melt with earth and sin away !
And saints beneath their Saviour’s eye,
Filled with each other’s company,
Shall spend in love the eternal day !’

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lord of all power and might, who art the Author and Giver of all good things; Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WE are apt to forget that the Lord of all power and might is both the Author and Giver of all good things; sometimes we recognize Him as the fountain, sometimes we recognize His mercy in the stream, but we rarely put together that as all good things have their origin in Him, so it is His hand that directs to us our portion of them. Thus, in the highest good, some see Him as the Author of the world's redemption, yet trust to self to apply and work it out; while some acknowledge that He is the Giver of all grace in the soul, but forget the wondrous source of purity and love by which that salvation can come to sinful man. In our natural relationships, we thank Him for giving us a friend, yet forget that He is the Author and Creator of all the friendship that exists in human hearts; in nature we acknowledge Him as the Maker of heaven and earth, but rarely thank Him for giving us day by day richly to enjoy their beauty; and so in every discovery of science or art He is the Author of the intellect that

makes the discovery and the Giver of the benefit it conveys to us; for instance, as an old French writer¹ observes, He taught men to express thought by written signs; in modern times the art of printing was bestowed on the civilized world, and for all the pleasure and instruction that art conveys to each of us we are indebted to Him who is the Author of human intellect and human skill, and Who causes both to be thus exercised for our individual benefit.

His word and His works are so linked together as to make the one illustrate the other; but we must beware of confounding their teaching: all Creation is indeed a parable, in which all we look on has a significance; but we may read its language wrong, and it is in the written Word that 'Jesus expoundeth all things to His disciples.' Yet does that Word so employ the familiar language of nature as to mingle sacred thoughts with her common processes. The graft is used to illustrate two different things; as in Romans, xi., where the wild olive branch is grafted into the good tree, representing the reception of the Gentile into the Jewish Church; and as in James, i., where 'the engrafted Word' represents the introduction of a new nature into the soul of man: in the first illustration, the part of the process of grafting employed is the fact that the new branch receives strength from the old root; whereas the second represents a good bud grafted

¹ Nicole.

into a tree, requiring the natural branches to be pruned and sacrificed in order that the precious one may flourish. It is in this sense we pray, ‘Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name;’ that love, alas! is not part of the natural plant; it must be grafted into our hearts, and bring forth its own blossom and its own fruit: ‘Increase in us true religion;’ let not the profession of faith and love lie dormant, let it not be a fruitless branch, but cause the divine life within us to grow and increase: ‘Nourish us with all goodness;’ strengthening our souls with the abundance of Thy grace; ‘and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same:’ let that grace and mercy which plants within us the love of Thy Name, ever keep us in that love, fervent in spirit and faithful in action.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth; we humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OUR ignorance, so often and so painfully proved, as to what things are profitable and what are hurtful to us, ought to work in us an entire acquiescence in the never-failing Providence of

God. We are placed in the midst of a vast system, of which all the parts are connected, and which is progressing towards an unseen end; we know not how the movement of one part acts upon another, nor do we know how the history of the whole tends to the consummation. There are inscrutable mysteries in the dealings of Providence, in the distribution of wealth and power; in the cutting short of valuable lives and prolonging of the useless; in the influences of education and of circumstances upon character; these contain secrets which we cannot fathom, neither can we at all comprehend how these things act, or to what they are subordinate means. When we contemplate the longest sojourn on earth we see but a very small portion of our existence, and we understand no more of the discipline proper to our education for the eternal future, than an infant understands the precautions for the preservation of his life and health or the culture that is preparing him for the duties of manhood; but if we believe that God's Providence ordereth all things in heaven and earth, (those things that are beyond our experience, as well as those that are within it,) we cannot doubt that He orders them well; that as nothing can hinder or interrupt His designs, so nothing happens without His observation of all its results and effects. We are quite sure that 'He makes no mistakes,' and yet we are often less willing to submit to His discipline than to that of an earthly physician, whose

prescriptions, if we trust his skill and honesty, we follow without wanting to understand them. He has said, ‘What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;’ and often after we have submitted in blind but loving faith to a dispensation which seemed altogether against us, we are graciously rewarded by being permitted to read its meaning distinctly, as tending often, very often, to our present happiness, and always tending to the formation of character on which our future good depends. No Christian can trace back his own history without confessing that he has often longed for ‘hurtful things,’ and has been angry that they were forbidden or withheld, and that he has often rebelled against those which he now sees to have been most ‘profitable;’ and this recollection should confirm his faith, while he now prays that God will avert the one and bestow the other, according to His Divine wisdom, not according to our short-sighted wishes. Our best blessings at first seemed disappointment and failure.

‘Thus the first gardener wept to see
The blossom fallen from the tree,
Till in its room, of ruddier hue,
The unexpected cherry grew.’

‘Religion consists in submission and resignation to the Divine Will;’ ‘our condition in this world is a school or exercise of this temper; and our ignorance, the shallowness of our reason, the temptations, difficulties, afflictions which we are

exposed to, all equally contribute to make it so.' 'It is indeed true that there can be no scope for patience where sorrow shall be no more; but there may be need of a temper of mind which shall have been formed by patience; and the proper discipline for resignation is affliction.'¹

Therefore let us not count it a hurtful thing if sorrow comes, neither let us doubt that by His grace prosperity may be made 'profitable' to us in the highest sense.

We are safest when for our earthly future we can as it were put a blank into His Hand, saying 'Father, not as I will but as Thou wilt;' assured that He is leading His people by a right way, that they may come to the City where they would dwell. Yet this entire acquiescence in His Will in no way checks the full freedom with which we should in everything make our requests known unto God. The child will freely and fearlessly tell his wishes if he is certain the parent will only give what is good, if he knows that the seeming good will be denied if it be really a thing hurtful.

¹ Bishop Butler.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do anything that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE Holy Spirit ruling and guiding the inner life alone can make us to think aright. Very few people do wrong with their eyes open; ('Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird;')¹ very few deliberately say 'This is wrong, but I choose to do it;' there is generally a self-deception, a sort of *glamour* thrown by the inclination over the judgment, which makes the act appear excusable, if doubtful; but if we in earnest wish to serve God, we must ask Him to dispel this false colouring, to make us see things as they are, and to shew us the truth, whatever it may be, on every subject with which we are concerned.

Among the sevenfold gifts described by Isaiah as resting on the human nature of our Lord, are 'the spirit of wisdom and knowledge,' and 'a quick understanding.' 'A right judgment, the spirit of a sound mind,' are gifts of the Holy Ghost which we ought most earnestly to covet;

¹ Proverbs, i. 17.

for even among those whose hearts are touched by the love of Christ, there is often a miserable deficiency of common sense, which brings reproach upon the Holy Name by which we are called; narrow or one-sided views, party spirit, self-opinionativeness, poor and entangled arguments, false deductions from admitted truths, all tend to practical error; if we think those things that be wrong, we shall also do them; false thoughts about God, about our fellow-creatures, about ourselves, are the root of false conduct concerning each. Truth itself may be turned into error by exalting one point to the depression of another; in fact, no lie gets a powerful hold of men's minds that is not founded upon some portion of truth, however perverted or exaggerated; and sometimes the truth and the falsehood get so entangled that it is a difficult process to separate them, or to distinguish without dividing two truths which are so misplaced as to alter their meaning by altering their relative position; and these snares and difficulties are daily increasing with the increasing refinement and activity of human intellect. At present everybody is thinking, be it right or wrong; let us beseech the Creator of intellect to be its Master and Guide; let the noble gift of thought be cultivated to the uttermost; let no Christian fancy that he best serves God with his heart by putting his intellect to sleep; but in proportion to its vivacity and its energy is the necessity for asking God to govern

it, to clarify its perceptions, and to regulate its conclusions.

The second clause of this Collect touches with the simplicity of truth on one of those entangled and exaggerated questions; ‘that we who cannot do anything that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy Will.’ Now many in their zeal to magnify the freeness of Divine grace, deny its fullness; they say that man is so corrupt that he never can be other than a loathsome object in God’s sight; that after he is justified by faith, and thus his eternal safety secured, he remains just as loathsome as ever; that his holiest work is as impure in God’s sight as his vilest; in short, that it is impossible for him to live according to God’s Will. This is to say that the holy touch of Jesus leaves the leper as unclean as it found him; that the engrafted vine branch bears no better fruit than the wild olive; that He does *not* ‘save His people from their sins,’ or ‘purify to Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.’ And yet such false statements are founded upon the truth that man never can have any *merit* before God—that His favour is always of grace, not of debt; and also that those who draw nearest to Him will always find in themselves most cause for humiliation, and will most deeply feel their need of the High Priest who ‘bears the iniquity of their holy things.’¹

¹ Exodus, xxviii. 38.

Our blessed Church in her Articles X. and XII. puts the whole subject in its true and Scriptural light. ‘We have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.’ ‘Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins or endure the severity of God’s judgement; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith.’

To deny that we can by God’s grace live according to His Will, is to acknowledge His power to forgive, but to deny His power to heal; and if by any necessity, it were *impossible* to live according to His Will, it surely could not be blameworthy to live according to our own; but His grace is as full as it is free; He does not open the prison door and yet leave the captive fettered so that he cannot rise to liberty; but He breaks the chains wherewith he is tied and bound, and bids him go forth and serve the Lord, whose service is perfect freedom.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIS prayer is founded on the inspired word of St. John, ‘This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His Will He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him;’ and this is indeed the same as the promise, ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name He will give it you;’ for however we may verbally ask in the Name of Christ, (adding that holy Name to our own wilful desires as a sort of charm,) there is no real asking in His Name but that which is in harmony with His mind; it is as His members, parts of His mystical body, that we have access through His mediation to the Throne of grace; and petitions offered *in* and *by* Him cannot but be according to the will of the Father. ‘He is the sole channel of all which is done by God towards man, or man towards God, under the Christian covenant;’ and therefore no desire ought to be cherished which we dare not put into the hand of the Mediator were He now to stand

in visible presence among us: neither need we fear to lay before ‘the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity’ any want or weakness which we might have brought to Jesus of Nazareth in the days of His suffering humanity, for it is that bleeding hand which lays our petition before the Mercy-seat.

We may most confidently offer all such petitions as have a promise to plead; thus David prayed, ‘Thou, O my God, hast told Thy servant that Thou wilt build him an house, *therefore* Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before Thee; and now, Lord, Thou art God, and hast promised this goodness to Thy servant; now therefore let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may be before Thee for ever; for Thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever. Therefore now, Lord, let the thing that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as Thou hast said.’ *Do as Thou hast said* is a plea that in its truth can never fail; but we may misunderstand or misapply a promise; so that the granting according to our interpretation of it would not be in reality the thing promised or the thing we want; we might mistake a stone for bread, and so ask in vain; and it is necessary to bear this in mind, otherwise we may ‘stagger at the promise of God through unbelief,’ and think it has failed when in truth it is receiving a richer and wider fulfilment.

‘Breaking the narrow prayers that may
Befit your narrow hearts, away
In His broad loving Will.’

‘He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.’

But the far more common fault is the neglecting to plead the promises at all, and few are the instances of a too personal or too literal application of them. As all the dealings of God with man are, as it were, contained in the Lord from Heaven, who is the second Adam, so that all the promises of God are in Him yea and in Him Amen, we may draw out of that great treasury according to our several necessities; not as though spoken to us individually but as belonging to Him who is our Head, and as given to us because given to Him; yet, in Him, ours as distinctly as if addressed to us by name. Thus, for instance, the promise, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,’ was made first to Israel collectively, (Deut. xxxi. 6.) and repeated to Joshua, (Joshua, i. 6.) and again to Solomon, (1 Chron. xxviii. 20.) individually; and St. Paul, addressing all Christians, (Hebrews, xiii. 5.) exhorts us to be without covetousness, ‘*for* He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ This promise, then, belongs, in Christ our Head, to the whole body, and is of special, local, and individual application, according to the circumstances which need its support; applicable in a peculiar manner to all who, like Joshua, encounter

danger and difficulty in the path of obedience, or who, like Solomon, are engaged in any work for God's service and in His honour.

We find the Old Testament history of public and domestic life abounding in specific answers to prayer, 'while they were yet speaking,' or while they waited a reply. There is a similar treasury within the Christian Church, of which the earliest instances are recorded in Scripture, and which continues to the present hour. No one ever had to say they trusted God too much, that they prayed and He answered not. There are many now living who could tell of supplies as direct from Heaven as the manna ; of guidance as distinct as that of the pillar of fire ; of comfort as sweet as 'though an angel spake to them,' all in answer to prayer—but if there be a reticence in all deep feeling, and a shrinking from an intrusive gaze in all close communion, how much deeper and keener must this feeling be with regard to the sacred intercourse between the soul and God ? Therefore it is, that the world remains ignorant of the evidence which is daily conveyed to the believing soul, that our God is the living God, who hears, and who answers ; and even when the veil is drawn aside, and the treasure is, as in recent publications and modern talk, exposed to public view, little is gained, because these things cannot be learned second hand ; even when the voice came from Heaven in answer to the prayer, 'Father, glorify Thy Name,' the

people that stood by and heard it said that it thundered.¹

‘That we may obtain our petitions, make us to ask such things as shall please Thee ;’ here seems a limit ; and yet who would presume to wish it otherwise ? to ask and to have that which is contrary to His Will ? We are enclosed within a circle, but that circle is Divine Love and Wisdom, and within that blessed boundary we are invited and commanded to lay, not only our wants but our wishes before God. Prayer is the appointed link between the giving and receiving ; it is now, as in the days of His sojourn on earth, ‘according to your faith be it unto you ;’ and alas ! also, ‘He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.’²

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, who declarest Thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity ; Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace, that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WHEN Moses said, ‘I beseech Thee shew me Thy glory,’ the Lord answered, ‘I will make all

¹ St. John, xii.

² St. Matt. xiii. 58 ; St. Mark, vi. 5, 6.

My goodness to pass before thee ; and the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,'¹ His glory was shewn in His goodness : and our Lord's whole life on earth was a similar revelation. Every miracle, with one exception, was an act of kindness ; an utterance of the forgiveness, the healing, the sympathy, the tenderness, the compassion, the providing care, into which the ocean of eternal love divides itself, as it touches the various points of human want. Every exhibition of Divine power was to be an expression of Divine mercy ; and therefore it was that 'the Man Christ Jesus' refused to exercise His power for His own relief or His own protection. The miracles were not only signs and wonders, but the utterance in action of that which the Word became flesh to reveal—that 'God is Love ;' and that His love is shewn, not only in the simple act of creating and bestowing good, but further, in overcoming evil ; they were a foretaste too of the restitution of all things, which will be the completion of the work of redemption, the victory of good over evil, the conquest of sin ; life through death ; joy through suffering ; the highest holiness through temptation conquered.

That 'mercy and pity' is shewn to the individual

¹ Exodus, xxxiv.

soul, in the forgiveness of all its iniquities, and the healing of all its diseases; in bidding it arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and teaching it to run the way of His commandments; that pathway which leads to the enjoyment of all His gracious promises.

There is something very remarkable in the expression ‘to be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure;’ it sounds like the lisping of a child concerning the things of manhood; we can little estimate the idea it seems to convey, somewhat like that wonderful word which the Church teaches us to utter at the feast of the Epiphany, ‘the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead;’ and yet, while we muse and wonder, the same grace which makes us ‘partakers of the Divine Nature,’¹ ‘partakers of His Holiness,’² can fit us to be partakers of His heavenly treasure, of that unimagined radiance where God dwells; so that even such as we may ‘rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’

¹ 2 St. Peter, i. 4.

² Hebrews, xii. 10.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire, or deserve; Pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

OH that we were as ready to pray as He is to hear! then would He ‘open unto us the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing;’ there should be ‘showers of blessing;’ but woe, woe to us if His mercy were limited to our prayers, if He gave us only what we ask; for we know not what things we have need of, and scarcely know even what we desire, so often is the deep reality of the heart’s hunger concealed even from our own perception, by the multitude of its superficial wishes and fancies. But He is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve; it is His wont to make all grace abound, even beyond the limit of His own promise. ‘That is so like Him!’ as a poor Negro said on hearing some striking instance of the Divine compassion. ‘I am not surprised; it is just like Him.’ It is His wont; He pours down the abundance of His mercy like rain on the parched ground of an eastern desert,

and distils it gently as the dew-drops on the petals of a rose. He openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Language labours in vain to express the abundance of the riches of His bounty; of that loving-kindness which so exquisitely adapts the material creation to its intelligent inhabitant, affording us not only the food convenient for us, but giving us richly all things to enjoy. This Collect occurs when the year, still crowned with its wreath of blossoms, is glowing in fruitful maturity, when the lavish profusion of all that delights the eye, helps to fill the heart

‘With worthy thoughts of the unwearied love,
That planned and built and still upholds a world
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man.’

That unwearied love, in satisfying the desire of every living thing, gives a pledge that the capacities of the human spirit shall also be satisfied; ‘I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul,’ saith the Lord; in His presence they shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more; ‘the hunger of the heart, the thirsting of the spirit,’ shall there meet an adequate supply.

‘Love kindles as I gaze; I feel desires
That give assurance of their own success,
And that infused from heaven, must thither tend.’

But beyond, or rather within, the arch of mercy which embraces all creatures, each soul craves

some special assurance of mercy to itself; ‘forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid;’ these are some of the secrets between the soul and God, into which the tenderest friendship cannot intrude. Confession to a human ear never could convey that which the soul pours forth to Him, ‘with groanings that cannot be uttered;’ for He Who is a Spirit, is the ‘God of the spirits of all flesh,’ and He alone can penetrate the recesses of spiritual sin and spiritual sorrow. Man hears his brother’s cry, ‘I have sinned against the Lord,’ but the Lord only can interpret it; and while He has given to His ministers both power and authority to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins, it is only His sweet Spirit, who can open the heart to receive the message, and whisper within the soul, ‘The Lord also hath put away thy sin;’ and then He gives to the penitent those good things, which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits, as our claim, and the mediation, as our connecting link, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service; Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A LITTLE child admiring the rich binding of his mother's Bible said, 'It is very pretty; I will give it to you, Mamma; it shall be a present from me to you.' Then seeing that she smiled, and recollecting that it was not the usual way of making gifts, he blushed and added, 'I know it is your own already; but everything I have is yours, and I am yours; so I can't give you anything that is not.' And thus it is with the Christian's offering: 'Of Thine own have we given Thee.'¹ Our intellect, our affections, our strength, our very life, with every several power or faculty that we can dedicate to His service, is His already, by right both of creation and redemption; for while, as our Creator, in Him we live and move and have our being, we are also called to glorify Him 'with our body, and our spirit, which are His,' because we 'are bought with a price.'² 'O Lord our God, all this store

¹ 1 Chronicles, xxix.

² 1 Corinthians, vi. 20.

that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thy Name, cometh of Thy hand, and is all Thine own.'¹

But this dear child had the will to give; that which is the best part of any offering, a willing and loving heart, was his own, though the gift he presented already belonged to his mother. It is not so with us; 'Of God's only gift it cometh that His people do unto Him true and laudable service.' 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should obtain strength to offer so willingly after this sort?'¹ the desire to offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to His service, is as much the result of His grace, as much a gift from Him, as is our final salvation; 'for it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'²

When St. Paul rejoiced over the liberality of the Church at Corinth, growing, as all true liberality does, out of self-denial, he added, 'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift;'³ that gift which can uproot selfishness, and replace it by a generous self-sacrifice and self-oblivion. Luxurious, self-indulgent, thieves, covetous, extortioners, such were some of those, who now by the grace of God, had become the benefactors of the poor saints; not by a sudden impulse, such as might influence the victor in the games flushed with triumph to scatter gold and silver among

¹ 1 Chronicles, xxix.

² Philippians, ii. 13.

³ 2 Corinthians, ix.

the crowd in his city, but by a regular and systematic arrangement, in which they deliberately took from themselves to distribute to others; and for this St. Paul congratulated them, and gave thanks to God. ‘God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having a sufficiency in all, may abound to every good work; being enriched in everything *to all bountifulness*, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.’¹ ‘We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;’² therefore, if we are really minded to ‘present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service,’ let us remember that it is ‘of His own that we give unto Him;’ and although we be unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto Him any sacrifice, yet let us beseech Him to ‘accept this, our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

¹ 2 Corinthians, ix.

² Ephesians, ii. 10.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain that which Thou dost promise, make us to love that which Thou dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THESE three graces are indissolubly united; ‘a threefold cord not easily broken.’ Without Faith, Love has no object, and Hope no foundation; and Faith is a sound without meaning, unless it produces Love and Hope; and, alike in their combination and in their distinctive characters, they have their origin in God, and from Him must be sought their growth towards perfection. ‘Lord, increase our *faith*,’¹ was the prayer of the Apostles, when the Lord set before them the difficult task of a perfect forgiveness of injuries; because that exercise of charity depended on the energizing power of their faith in Him, Whose forgiveness is the source and measure and pattern of ours.

‘Your *faith*,’ says St. Paul, ‘groweth exceedingly, and’ (as a necessary result) ‘the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.’² And Hope also is closely connected with Charity; ‘Hope maketh not ashamed, because the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy

¹ St. Luke, xvii. 5.

² 2 Thessalonians, i. 3.

Ghost which is given unto us;¹ and it is ‘through the power of the Holy Ghost’ we are to ‘abound in hope;’² while one of the characteristics of Charity is that she ‘hopeth all things.’

Some natures are more hopeful than others; but a natural buoyancy must not be mistaken for this Christian grace. The one is a hope in the future, the other is a hope in God; the one hopes for the things it desires, the other hopes for what Faith tells it God has promised; for ‘Faith is enlightened Hope.’ In times of dull discouragement, in the dank chill of adversity, the difference will be proved, for hope in God will endure when a vague hope in the future withers away; and we often find that the characters most deficient in an instinctive hopefulness, least disposed to the general impression, that everything will turn out as they wish, are those most firm in the confidence that even when ‘clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His Throne;’ this is Hope in God, not in circumstances, and this is a gift of His Spirit even when it is weak and trembling. There is a plant in the prairies called the compass flower, which bows its flexible stem with every breeze, yet points to the northern star as truly as the unbending steel; and thus it is with many Christians.

‘The hope of my spirit turns trembling to Thee,
My God, trembling to Thee.’

¹ Romans, v. 5.

² Romans, xv. 18.

It is commonly said that in eternity Faith will be lost in sight, and Hope in fruition, while only Love shall abide ; but we are not so taught in the passage (1 Cor. xiii.) from which the idea is supposed to be derived. ‘Prophecies shall fail,’ because prediction and teaching will be alike unnecessary. (Jeremiah, xxxi.; Hebrews, viii.) ‘Tongues shall cease,’ because the miraculous gift of various utterances will not be required when ‘The Lord shall turn to the people a pure lip, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord.’ ‘Knowledge shall vanish away,’ as the dawn of morning vanishes into the brightness of noon-tide, as the reasoning of the child is dismissed by the man ; but when these things have passed away, ‘now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three.’ Faith, in her office of recognizing the invisible, will not be needed where we dwell ever in sight of all our bliss ; but there will be for ever growing and increasing that faith in God as a Person, as a Friend, as a Saviour, to which that office now ministers ; our faith, here in its infancy, will there grow up unto Him in all things, penetrating deeper and deeper into the knowledge of the Lord ; and Hope, which is now like a bird just learning to flit from branch to branch, will then soar into boundless space ; there will be room for Hope so long as there is an eternity of unfathomed glory. It is objected to this view that Hope must cease in possession ; ‘what a man seeth, why doth

he yet hope for? we hope for that we see not.' True; but we can never possess at any one period of existence *all* that God has to bestow; the heavenly treasure never can be exhausted; and therefore there will be for ever the enjoyment of bliss anticipated, as well as present. Memory and Hope, and Trust, are integral parts of the human nature; and they will in their perfection live in the presence of 'Him Who was and is and is to come;' 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' 'Who is an adequate supply to all the faculties of our souls; a subject to our understanding, and an object to our affections.'

'But the greatest of these is Charity;' not because there will be no faith and no hope in His kingdom of glory, but because Love is of God, and every spark of true love is a portion of the divine nature; 'the deepest quality in the bosom of Deity is Love, and the life of God in man is Love.' Faith and Hope belong to the creature; they are God's gift to man by creation, and are again renewed as gifts of the Holy Ghost; but they are not attributes of Deity, and God is Love; therefore Love is the greatest. And in their very highest and purest exercise, Faith and Hope will minister to love, as now they do, bringing nobler revelations of the divine character, and wider developments of the heavenly treasure, for Love to feed upon. But in this prayer of ours, as in the prayer of the Apostle, (1 Thess. i. &c.) these three graces are spoken of as the com-

panions of our pilgrimage, not in their ultimate perfection; and we ask for their increase in our own souls that we may obtain His promises, in the love of His commands. The hope that is set before us is, that 'we shall be like Him;' that 'His servants shall serve Him,' that 'His Name shall be in our foreheads;' and it is only in a true love of His commands, a true effort, however feeble, to serve Him here, that we can ever desire to obtain these promises. To a heart at enmity with God they sound rather like threatenings than promises, for in the unbelieving soul there is no capacity for their enjoyment.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy: and, because the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by Thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

He Who is the Head of the Church, alone can 'keep her from falling, and present her before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.'¹ The frailty of human nature without Him cannot but fall; and that not only because 'man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own

¹ Jude, 24.

nature inclined to evil,' but because as a creature, his safety consists in union with the Creator. His sin was, and is, the desire to be independent—‘Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;’ his perfect restoration will consist in the renewal of an unhesitating, unquestioning dependence; and meanwhile, every fall is occasioned by an attempt to walk apart from God, trusting in our own strength. ‘Thy perpetual mercy,’ implies a continuous and yet repeated action; it is meant to signify that we need not only to be set in the right way, but to be kept therein; not only as pilgrims to be directed, but as the blind to be guided, and as infants to be upheld. The idea of salvation is too often limited to the one fact of an escape from a place of punishment, and an admission into a place of felicity; and in this view there can be no progress, no degrees; but, regarding it as not only a change of position and locality, but a change of state and character, a change from darkness to light, from sickness to health, from death to life—as a process of healing the disease of sin—as a gradual assimilation to the mind of Christ—we can understand how outward events and all other instruments of God’s discipline may be ‘profitable to our salvation;’ and so we pray to be led to such things as have that tendency.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O Lord, we beseech Thee, let Thy continual pity cleanse and defend Thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without Thy succour, preserve it evermore by Thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WHEN God in His great pity *cleanses* His Church, He may afflict her, as though He had forgotten to *defend*; but in truth He is her defence as much when she is passing through deep waters, as when she is rejoicing in the sunshine; truly He is her defence against her worst enemies, when ‘He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver; and purifies the sons of Levi, and purges them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.’¹

It is by the closest of all human connections that the Apostle illustrates that love which cleanses and defends; ‘even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.’²

¹ Malachi, iii. 8.

² Ephesians, v.

Throughout the New Testament, and in all those portions of the Old which refer to the dispensation of the Gospel, we find that the great promise is, cleansing from sin; and we never find the idea of Divine forgiveness severed from sanctification; they are *distinguished*, but never *separated*; just as we can distinguish the light and heat which are indissolubly united in the sunbeam. ‘The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;’¹ not more by its atoning efficacy than by that power whereby ‘the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.’² ‘I will save you from all your uncleannesses, from all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you,’³ saith the Redeemer, whose name is ‘called Jesus, because He shall save His people *from* their sins.’

And as with the individual soul, so with the Church collectively; His love is shewn in cleansing and purification, whether from errors of doctrine or of practice. In the Epistles to the seven Churches we find no compromise with sin, none of that unmeaning creed, that you are safe because you believe yourself safe, which has become the Shibboleth of a large party of religionists; but a close searching of heart, for the express purpose of detecting and destroying

¹ 1 St. John, i.

² Hebrews, ix. 14.

³ Ezekiel, xxxvi.

whatever is contrary to godliness; a fulfilment of the declaration, ‘I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil;’¹ and each of these Epistles commences with such a representation of the character or office of our Great High Priest, as is suited to meet the prevailing fault of those on whom His penetrating gaze is turned; in Whose pure eyes every act of sin is as hateful now as was the first sin which brought death upon the sons of men.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lord, we pray Thee that Thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[‘We have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.’—Article X.]

His grace, that is the influence of His Holy Spirit, must meet with us to impede our downward course, to turn us ‘from our own doings and from our stubborn way;’ and follow us, to make

¹ Zephaniah, i. 12.

² Article X.

us 'to will and to do of His good pleasure.' To be continually given to all good works, is not a life of ease; it is not the kind of life most Christians are leading. Are we willing with full purpose of heart to offer this prayer? are we willing that it should be answered, so that from this day forward we should live the life it describes? '*Continually* ;' not by a spasmodic effort of duty; not by an impulse of feeling; not by the restless working of natural activity; not by the desire to patronize, and to be the doer of work, the benefactor, the guide; not by any of these, but by a patient continuance in well doing, must we pursue this walk in the foot-prints of Him 'Who went about doing good.'

'*Given to good works* ;'—prone to them, tending to them as the habitual object of daily life; disposed to help in them; not patronizing them from afar, or bestowing on them the aid of a superior, but *giving ourselves* to them; giving our personal care, our personal influence, our personal sympathy; giving our feelings to be torn by the sufferings of others; our thoughts to labour or be perplexed by the difficulties of others; our hearts to be bowed in humiliation for the sins of others; our intellect to meet and enlighten the ignorance of others; our bodies to be weary in the service of others; our luxuries to yield to the comforts of others; our comforts to yield to the necessity of others: these things require a *continual* sacrifice of self; and perseverance in such a course can be

produced by no lower motive than the constraining love of Christ, Who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

'To *all* good works ;' not to a selection of such as suit our tastes or harmonize with our inclinations. There is sometimes a sympathy with mental suffering, and sometimes an anxiety concerning spiritual welfare, with indifference to bodily sufferings and wants ; and very often there is the reverse—pity for poverty or pain, and no feeling for the sorrows of the spirit ; but here we pray, and in so praying, offer ourselves to God, to be '*given to all* good works.' Now what are good works ? They are such as 'God hath before prepared, that we should walk in them ;' therefore any action, however brilliant, which can only be accomplished by overstepping the line of an obvious duty, is not a good work in His sight. He has appointed to each one his or her own peculiar sphere of work, in some cases very narrow, in some very wide ; in some stationary, in some desultory ; it is the duty of one to cultivate some small spot, to sow, to water, and to reap there ; of another to scatter portions of good over a broad surface, never '*knowing which shall prosper, whether that or this ;*' never permitted to gather the fruit where he planted the tree. Some are called to a higher and nobler office than others, as '*there are in a great house vessels of gold and silver and also of wood and stone.*' But in every position in which a Christian

can be placed there is some work to be done for Christ, and that is ‘good work ;’ a carrying out of His purposes of mercy to mankind ; a reproduction in His disciples, of that walk through the world, in which He scattered healing, and comfort, and teaching, and pity, at every step. Every evening should record its tale of ‘something attempted, something done,’ for our Master, Christ ; something of which before we lie down to sleep, we can give Him an account ; as the ‘Apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.’

There is always the danger of loving the work more than the Master ; of forming interests and entering on tasks apart, as it were, from Him ; and then it is in great mercy He breaks up our machinery, cuts short our schemes of usefulness, embitters the selfish sources of our philanthropy, and leaves us, standing still in the midst of the overthrow of our own arrangements, to ask, ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?’ There is also the opposite danger—that of making our duty a hard task ; of doing it for the sake of fulfilling our part, without throwing our hearts into it ; of giving outward service and withholding heartfelt sympathy. In this tone of mind there is some leaven of a legal spirit—something of the spirit of the servant who said, ‘I knew thee that thou art an austere man ; lo, there thou hast that is thine ;’ and for this, as for every other form of

selfishness, there is only the one remedy—that is, a free admission into the heart of the free love of Christ, so that it may flow forth from us to all for whom Christ died; ‘Freely ye have received, freely give.’

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

No question is of more practical importance than this—What are the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, against which we pray?

‘The works of the flesh,’ which we profess to renounce, and from which we this day pray to be delivered, ‘are manifest;’ they appear to be the natural inclinations of the human constitution, bodily and mental, carried to excess, or indulged in any manner or degree contrary to the revealed Will of God; the ‘fulfilling of the desires of the flesh and of the mind,’ without reference to Him, is the natural course of ‘the children of wrath;’ ‘that which is born of the flesh is flesh,’ and nothing better; to yield to its inclinations, unchecked by fear, and uninfluenced by love, is to be ‘of the earth, earthly;’ and ‘if ye live after

the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' The works of the devil, are those feelings *not* belonging to the natural constitution, which have been infused into mankind by the enemy; blasphemy, which has neither the temptation of pleasure nor profit; malice, envy, hatred, revenge, and all the passions which have in them the germ of murder; for 'he was a murderer from the beginning;' and 'he that hateth his brother is a murderer' like him. Let us remember that we are praying to God against a reality; for it seems almost forgotten, where it is not actually denied, that this deadly enemy of God and man is a living and present and personal existence—'Your adversary the devil.' We pray for grace to resist his temptations, and we quote the assurance, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;' but in order to resist we must believe in his personality, his power, and his malice. In our present state of softness and shrinking from the sterner aspects of truth, it sounds very shocking to suggest that there is an evil spirit, even the prince of the power of the air, 'going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it,' casting his fiery darts into our souls, in the midst of all our refinement and philanthropy; yet this is a fact as distinctly stated as any other truth of revelation; and great is the triumph of the Destroyer when we are so deceived, so cease to believe his power or even his existence, as to

cease to watch and pray against him. Very dangerous are the many ways, in which the evil presence is now openly denied, or as openly trifled with. We want a Martin Luther to stand up amongst us, and recall us to a sense of the danger which surrounds us, from the subtle spiritual enemy, whose power is mocked and whose presence is forgotten.

But what is meant by ‘the world,’ which we profess to renounce ? of which St. John speaks, when he says, ‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him ;’ and of which St. James declares, ‘The friendship of the world is enmity against God ;’ to which St. Paul commands the Roman Christians ‘not to be conformed.’ What is it ? It cannot be this beautiful planet which God beheld as the abode He had formed for man, and pronounced it ‘very good ;’ still less can it be the inhabitants of this earth, those for whom Christ died, and whom we are commanded to love, even as He loves. Is it then the heathen practices and customs by which the early Christians were surrounded ? and is the warning limited to those who dwell in heathen lands ? are we, surrounded by the forms and laws of Christianity, exempt from all danger from ‘the world ?’ has our renunciation of it become an obsolete form ? is this prayer for grace to withstand its allurements a solemn mockery ?

Alas, there is a wicked world around us, and

within us too ; there is a spirit of worldliness which ‘eats as doth a canker,’ dwarfing and defiling where it does not destroy ; the world is still as much at enmity with God as it ever was, and it is as needful for us, as it was for our fore-fathers, to verify the baptismal vow, ‘I renounce them all ;’ there still exist ‘the pomps and vanity of this wicked world,’ just as when our Catechism was composed. Attempts to draw hard lines of demarcation between one occupation or one recreation and another, to define clearly what is of ‘the world’ and what is not, to lay down fixed rules, without considering cases, circumstances, and exceptions, have signally failed ; and that failure has produced a reaction, so that it is almost forgotten that any distinction exists, and that the followers of Christ are not to be conformed to this world, that the Lord Jesus has said, ‘Ye cannot serve God and Mammon ;’ but we must bear in mind, that there *is* a something to be renounced, which is not vice, or crime, or immorality ; because these things are condemned by their own names, both in Scripture and by the Church, and are not included under the general idea of ‘the world.’ The Church classifies the world’s temptations, against which we are warned, under two heads ; ‘the pomps and vanity of the world,’ and ‘all covetous desires of the same.’ Now the vain pomp and glory of the world is not one lofty height of ambition, or one successful pursuit of popularity, or any one form of power,

or beauty, or brightness, equally to be shunned by all; it is impossible to lay down rules for others, where each man's character and circumstances form what is his world; but we may grasp at principles which each can apply for himself. 'This present evil world,' signifies that frame-work of society which makes the concerns of this life its aim and object; that spirit which says to God, 'Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me,' to spend as I list, without reference to Thee: and this world is an atmosphere which affects in varied ways, and degrees, different constitutions; to one its wealth and rank, to another its praise and fame, to another its gaiety and amusement, to another its refinement and research, present the attraction which draws the soul from God; the charm which wins it away from longing after a higher good; the portion which enables it to live in a far country, apart from the Father's house; the satisfaction, or rather the pursuit after satisfaction, which limits its desires to the present state of existence. The soul, formed for God, ought *now* to find its happiness in communion with Him and in obedience to Him, and to live and rejoice in hope of the glory yet to be revealed; whatever has the tendency to withdraw it from this joy in God, to raise a barrier between, to darken this hope, to make this life appear more true and more important than the eternal life to come, is a withering blast from the world, though it may

not be perceptibly a work of either the flesh or the devil; but none can judge for another what has this tendency; the circumstances most fatally attractive to one mind, may have no influence on another.

We have lately seen in the character of our beloved and lamented Prince¹ how the simplicity and purity of the Christian life, and the rejoicing of the Christian hope, may be preserved while treading the loftiest heights of ambition, and surrounded by every charm that could make this world a home; he, whose prosperity was the envy of Europe, was of all men the most unworldly; one may, as he did, pass scatheless through a career of magnificence and enjoyment; while to another the free indulgence of any one taste may become a snare. Whatever leads the soul to seek, or to rest in as its final aim and object, anything lower than God, is of the earth, earthly; let us then deal honestly with ourselves, and each one will learn in his own case, what he ought to shun, and what to renounce.

‘Whatever passes as a cloud between
The mental eye of faith and things unseen,
Causing that brighter world to disappear,
Or seem less lovely, or its hope less dear;
This is our world, our idol, though it wear
Affection’s symbol, or devotion’ air.’

The vain pomp and glory of the world consists in false appearances; the desire to wear a

different aspect from the true one; to deceive, and to be deceived, by words and shadows; pretension, display; the preference of appearance to reality, of grandeur to happiness, of station to character, of show to substance, of praise to esteem, of popularity to attachment, of admiration to friendship; the varnished, painted external life which is hollow at the centre—all this is of the world which passeth away: truth is of God; unreality and all false profession, in word or act, is of the world, even where it does not amount to the crime of hypocrisy. Besides this, there is what even worldlings see in each other, and call ‘a worldly mind;’ a grasping at gain of any sort or kind, a constant regard to self-interest; a constant care of self, and guarding of self; a protection of self from all that can annoy; a securing of a safe retreat; a fear of going one mile, lest they be compelled to go twain; a watchful guard of the right hand over the left in matters of liberality; a jealous fear lest if the coat be given the cloak may also be taken; a pursuit of all that tends to self-exaltation; this worldly mind may exist in any class of society; it sees self in everything, and walks through life with a mirror in which the image of self overshadows every other object; and unhappily it is often combined with devotion to laudable pursuits, in which self-elation, self-gratulation, self-advancement in some shape, puts the world in the place of Christ. This spirit is

the very opposite of the spirit of a little child, and must be renounced if, as little children, we would enter the Kingdom.

‘This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith.’ Faith weans the soul from cleaving to the dust, by exhibiting the Home which the Saviour has prepared for it; all the vain pomp and glory of the world sink into insignificance by reason of the glory that excelleth; and Faith too delivers from that eager pursuit of self-interest, which under various names (sometimes very holy names) eats out the heart of Christianity, for it enables the soul to trust in Him ‘who undertakes for us,’ to repose in Him, and so to cease from a too watchful care about self.

To withstand, by God’s grace, the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, is not a passive attitude; to cast off allegiance to these tyrants we must serve another Master, and ‘with pure hearts and minds follow the only true God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; Mercifully grant, that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A SENSE of solemnity pervades the congregation when we are asked to pray for some individual sufferer, or for some peculiar visitation to be removed, or some peculiar blessing to be granted, because while it specifies the purport it implies the value of united prayer; and this feeling deepens in proportion to the numbers who are joined in it; but when a union for prayer forms a zone round the globe, when men in every region of the earth agree together, not by two and three, but by thousands, to meet before God at a certain time and present to Him a certain petition, who can estimate the vast importance of such a cry entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth? And so it is this day; wherever the English tongue is spoken, the confession and the prayer are ascending, ‘Forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.’ Here is a union prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which no private effort could produce; only let

it be real, and a blessing surely will follow. May He ‘*direct* our hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ;’ may He *rule* us as the Sovereign of our affections and sympathies!

Are we quite ready to offer this petition? no doubt we wish for it in many things, but is it quite true we wish Him to direct and rule in all? is there no reservation? no desire, no passion, no discontent, no murmuring, no treasure of memory or of hope, that we would fain keep in our possession and under our own rule? if so, this prayer cometh out of feigned lips, and is lifeless—never ascending to the throne of grace. Must we then wait, and not ask for the Holy Spirit till we can bring every affection to His footstool? No; for then we would never seek the Spirit until His highest work was accomplished: but thus we may come honestly and truly; if there be anything we would fain retain, let us tell it out to God, let us tell Him that we are not yet willing to yield ourselves, and ask Him to make us willing; let us tell Him what it is we are reluctant to give up, and ask Him to make us really desire His rule and guidance. The Holy Spirit does not direct the human heart by an external force; it is not moved by outward pressure like a machine, or inflated like a balloon so as to take its allotted course unconsciously; the Spirit of God breathes on the spirit of man, such as it is; renews it in the image it has lost

through sin; purifies, but never annihilates its affections, clarifies its reason, elevates its hope, makes it true and truth-loving, instead of false to itself, and to God; ‘The law of the Lord is not a hard task-master over the head, but a sweet principle within the heart;’¹ the ‘unruly affections’ are brought into harmony, the perverse will into submission, the groveling imagination is filled with pure and holy visions, the ambition is elevated to the noblest object of pursuit. And thus, ‘he who loses his life shall find it;’ he who lays down his whole being, his whole self, to be moulded by the Spirit of God, who renounces all possession of self, and gives himself up to God, shall ‘find his life’ in purity here, and in glory hereafter.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O Almighty and most merciful God, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE leading idea of this prayer is found in the words *ready* and *cheerful*; to be ready both in body and mind to do the Will of God implies a

¹ Archbishop Leighton.

great deal; it expresses a healthy and a happy spirit, a quick discernment, and a willing obedience to the slightest intimation. We read in descriptions of Eastern manners how the attendants of the great are directed by a glance or a movement; and this habit was before the Psalmist's mind when he wrote, 'Behold, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God;' 'Lord, here am I; send me;' 'Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do?' A glad and perfect obedience is the bliss of Heaven; a reluctant and half-hearted obedience is the misery of the Church on earth; for though a willing service is 'perfect freedom,' a half service, an attempt to serve two masters, is cruel bondage.

There is sometimes a rushing forward at our own bidding in anticipation of His, like the Israelites at Ai, in which we are sure to fail; sometimes an uncertainty and hesitation, as if hoping the unwelcome duty might pass away; sometimes the forward will and the lingering foot combined; but a ready and cheerful discernment of and acquiescence in His commands, 'a readiness to will and a performance also,' is a high and rare attainment, and it is this only which 'accomplishes that which He would have done.' We are left here to 'occupy till He comes,' by following the path He trod, and in

our low degree carrying on His work on earth as the Friend of the needy, the Helper of the helpless, the Comforter of the afflicted, the Support of the destitute, the Teacher of the ignorant; and in every period and every station and every circumstance of life, some part of this work is assigned to each one of us.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THERE is deep repose and heavenly sweetness in this brief prayer; it has the quiet simple melody of a cradle song, while yet it breathes the height and depth and expanse of all our necessities—pardon and peace. Pardon, the fountain; peace, the stream; pardon, the gift of God through the atoning sacrifice of our only Lord and Saviour; peace, the gift of God through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

The effect of pardon is to ‘cleanse us from all our sins,’ not only by the fact, but by the influence of that most precious blood-shedding; for the blood of Jesus Christ makes white in reality, as well as accounts white, the robes that

are washed therein; the effect of peace is to cause us to serve Him with a quiet mind; not the quiet of indolence, but the hush of a summer's noon, when nature in her silence works most richly, developing the flower, ripening the fruit, filling all things living with gladness.

There cannot be a true or loving service till there is assurance of pardon for Christ's sake, and of peace with God through the Blood of the Cross. In the agonized struggle of a soul awake to the sense of sin and danger ere it has found a refuge, there is no room for unselfish devotion; the terrors of the Law can no more produce a holy life, than the thunderbolt can quicken the fruits of the earth. Pardon, the forgiveness of sins, redemption through His blood believed in and accepted, is the root of the tree of Christian life; peace is its flower and fruit.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household the Church in continual godliness; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE word 'household' applies to the Church in connection with its rule and government as a

society ; a household is something different from a number of individuals congregated together by their own choice and inclination. The household of faith is contrasted with the household ordered by the Mosaic ritual ; and Christ rules in it ‘as a Son over His own house ; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end.’ We beseech Him to keep this His household in continual *godliness*.

External duties, moral duties, duties which have reference to our fellow-creatures, are sometimes allowed to absorb too much ; worship, the direct service of God, sometimes is regarded as a means rather than an end ; but true worship has a twofold aspect ; it is as really an offering and tribute presented to God, as it is a channel for drawing down blessing on the world. To repeat forms of prayer without considering their meaning, or ‘in a tongue not understood of the people,’ as a sort of offering to God, is just the vain repetition of the heathen, and is a solemn mockery of Him who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth ; nevertheless there is a danger also of praying *only* that we may *get* : of making worship to consist *only* in the cry of want. It is also an act of homage ; an act of recognition of His power and majesty ; a voice of confession acknowledging what we are, and what He is ; of thanksgiving for what He is to us, and of pure praise and adoration for what He is in Himself. It is of such worship St. Paul speaks, when he

says, ‘By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name ;’ it is to such the prophet Hosea calls the people of God : ‘ O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thy iniquity ; take with you words, and turn unto the Lord, and say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously ; so will we render the calves of our lips ;’ thus connecting the sacrifice of praise with the thank-offerings of the Jewish ritual. ‘ May we learn more to seek communion with God, not merely as the strength for work, but as the end and crown of all work ; not chiefly as the means of life, but as its highest object ;’ this is godliness.

There is a subtle form of idolatry in the worship of duty and usefulness apart from God. In this age of activity, when there is almost^t a rivalry who shall do most for his generation, who shall be most quick in devising liberal things, and most original in the mode of meeting every form of want, there are very many works, which as they regard this world are good works, which well merit and justly obtain the praise of men, which yet have not the element of godliness, in which there is no devotion to God or desire for His glory. The simple rule for all our doings is this : ‘ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in Heaven ;’ be a light reflector, not as though the light were in yourself ; give to

Him the honour and praise of what is seen to be good in you ; and this can only be done by the visible worship, which confesses Him before men. But some would hide their light, and all but deny their allegiance, lest their deficiencies should bring reproach on the Master.

‘Time was I shrank from what was right,
From fear of what was wrong.’

We are told that the good Judge Hale concealed his strong religious convictions, lest if he were regarded as a godly man his faults might lead impious men to blaspheme the Holy Name by which he was called ; in this there is a want of simple trust, and also a forgetfulness of the fact that we, the baptized, are already called by that Holy Name, whether we confess it or not.

‘So when my Saviour calls I rise,
And calmly do my best ;
Leaving to Him, with silent eyes
Of hope and fear, the rest.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O God, our Refuge and Strength, who art the Author of all godliness; Be ready, we beseech Thee, to hear the devout prayers of Thy Church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O GOD our Refuge and Strength! our Shelter from all evil while we hide ourselves in Thee; our Strength in the conflict which at Thy bidding we wage against Thine enemy and ours; Thou art the Author of all godliness. We cannot too often dwell on the fact that all good has its origin in God, that all the justice, the tenderness, the generosity, the compassion, which are found in the human race, even our very capacity for recognizing such qualities, have their existence from Him, and shew forth His praise as do the beauty and order of the inanimate creation; both being the work of His hand and the expression of His mind. Men sometimes set up human virtue in an attitude of antagonism to God, as though the creature held it by an independent right, and demanded its reward; whereas if there be One Creator, all good things come of Him, and are by Him vivified and preserved: and, on the opposite side, men sometimes deprecate human nature, exaggerating the extent to which

the Fall has obliterated the original design, and calling good evil, and sweet bitter, by way of giving more glory to the work of redemption ; whereas all that lingers of grace or beauty around the darkened mirror, every ray of light it still reflects, is a ray of divine grace, and nothing separate or independent ; and if this be true of whatever good may be found in unregenerate nature, it is doubly true of those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit, and of whose godliness He is as much the Author as He was of Adam's first existence.

Be ready, we beseech Thee, to hear the devout prayers of Thy Church. ‘The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry ;’ but there is a state of hardened unbelief of which the awful words are spoken, ‘When ye make many prayers I will not hear,’ therefore it behoves us to beseech Him to make our prayers such as He can answer, for these rejected prayers cannot be devout prayers, prayers of the heart. The word is sure of every approach to Him, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out ;’ and the prayer which He rejects is the hypocritical ‘drawing near with the lip, while the heart is far from Him.’

There is a beautiful expression in the French translation of the Psalms—‘Je me suis retiré vers Toi ;’ ‘Je me retire vers Toi ;’ it gives the idea of that ‘looking unto Jesus’ which implies a looking away from every other object to fix the

eyes on Him. ‘Devotion,’ says Bishop Butler, ‘is retirement from the world He has made to Him alone ; it is to withdraw from the avocations of sense to employ our attention wholly upon Him, as upon an object actually present ; to yield ourselves up to the influence of the Divine Presence, and to give full scope to the affections of gratitude, love, trust, reverence, and dependence ; this is the highest exercise and employment of mind that a creature is capable of.’ To these we may add the affection called admiration, the first developed in infancy, and that which will endure for ever. The culminating point of worship is pure adoration ; ‘We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty ;’ such will it be when we cast our crowns before the Throne and cry, ‘Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and praise, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created.’

And thus to withdraw ourselves to God, there need not be the seclusion of the cloister, or that ‘hiding of ourselves from our own flesh,’ which God condemns. He is very nigh unto us ; and a moment’s recollectedness places us in that position, apart from all external influences, when the soul can say, ‘Alone, yet not alone, for the Father is with me.’

If we hope that our prayers will be answered

we ought well to weigh their nature and character, especially that of the ‘devout prayers of the Church’ collectively; we ought to avail ourselves of the great advantage of a written liturgy by a studious consideration of the petitions we are invited to offer for ourselves and others, instead of following heedlessly the words of a leading voice, and putting our Amen to we know not what.

To render prayer effectual, it must be presented in the way of God’s appointment, ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ This termination of the Church’s petitions is not a mere formula, but it is the symbol of the great truth of Christianity, that man has access to the Throne of Grace only through the Mediator—(‘No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,’ saith the Lord,)—that He, Who being God, humbled Himself to take upon Him our nature, is now and for ever the only meeting place between the divine and human. We have no right to rush into the presence of the Most High otherwise than by His own invitation, or to address the Spirit of the Universe otherwise than as that glorious Spirit has been pleased to reveal Himself; and this is not to limit or trammel our approach, but to render access possible; and if possible, how free! how welcome! for we come not as trembling rebels, but as pardoned sinners—not as strangers, but as fellow-citizens with the saints—not as servants, but as sons; for now are we the children of God

by faith in Christ Jesus. This conclusion of all our prayers is a brief epitome of this blessed truth—that ‘we have a great High Priest that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God; . . . let us *therefore* come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.’¹

‘We are wont to conclude our prayers with “through Jesus Christ our Lord;” and this is the specification whereby the worship of a Christian is distinguished from that of a Jew.’²

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

O Lord, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences; that through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed: Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ’s sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

‘ABSOLVE Thy people.’ We never can approach God as innocent creatures only requiring to be sustained; at the last as at the first, and at every step of our progress in the narrow way as at the first entrance into it, the cry of the soul must be, ‘God be merciful to me, the sinner;’ we come to

¹ Hebrews, iv.

² Mede.

Him weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin, beseeching Him to absolve us from our offences; and this none the less sincerely, none the less of necessity, because we believe that 'our sins are forgiven us for His Name's sake.' Each act of sin, whether of commission or of omission; every memory of past sin, in thought, word, or deed, must bring us to the foot of the Cross with the prayer, 'Forgive us our trespasses;' the 'Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness' never is closed, and there we must daily come to be washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb.

The expression, 'the bands of those sins,' unveils a sad truth; sin never stands solitary; its nature is to multiply; like the banyan tree, the branches take root till one plant becomes a grove. Almost every form of sin produces, in addition to itself, temptation to falsehood and hypocrisy; for weary years the soul may be tied and bound, and the way entangled by difficulties and perplexities originating in one sin which by our frailty we have committed, and have denied.

The bands of habit are very strong, and draw us almost unconsciously to good or bad; it is not simply that by repetition a certain line of action becomes easy to us, but also it surrounds itself with a variety of other interests, which take wide and deep root in the life; which enthral our very powers of resistance; from which our only refuge lies in confession and prayer, that as

we are tied and bound by the chain of our sin,
He will of the pitifulness of His great mercy
absolve us, loose us, and set us free.

But where we have long been bound in chains of evil habits, whatever they may be, this prayer, to be honest, demands of us a strenuous and continued effort; no single exertion, however strong, will break the power of habit; it must be worn out by a process of resistance, as steady and persevering as that process by which it attained its influence. There is a sea-weed called on our shores ‘dead men’s cord,’ because it twists its long soft slender threads around the swimmer, so as to paralyze effort by entangling the limbs; and such is the power of evil habit.

Again, sin becomes ‘bands’ through its connection with the affairs of others: it is sometimes difficult to ‘break off your sin by righteousness,’ because it has brought you into relationships that involve the well-being or the feelings of others; you may say, ‘I did wrong in the first instance, but now to alter my conduct would only aggravate the evil;’ here is a band of iron indeed; yet it is certain, that a continuance in evil doing never tends to remedy its beginning, and that a deliverance from the bondage of sin, whatever it be, is the best for all concerned.

For example: a young person may enter into engagements, more or less important, in opposition to the will of the parent, and then become perplexed as to the right path, because the

happiness or pleasure or interest of others would be injured by a return to filial duty; this is a dead man's cord that often weaves itself around the unwary; but we have no more right to gratify others than ourselves by the sacrifice of obedience, we have promised or given that which was not ours to give, and it must be withdrawn; and if the effort be to do right at any cost, God will hear this prayer and give deliverance from the bands of the repented sin.

Again, sin surrounds the soul with bands of thoughts and memories that press down its aspirations, and often interrupt its devotion; importunate longings or regrets that disturb its peace and distract its intentions: sin is a cruel bondage, alike in the tyranny which one evil act exercises with the soul, and the perplexity in which it involves the external life; well might the Psalmist cry, 'Deliver my feet out of the net, keep me from the snares which they have laid for me.' May we this day in all our congregations offer this prayer with such earnest truth, that we may with him rejoice, and sing, 'Our soul is escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken and we are escaped.'

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WHEREVER the principle of love to God exists in the soul, it needs a continual influence from above to keep it in warmth and vivifying action; and wherever there is an earnest desire to serve the Lord, there is a necessity for redoubled watchfulness. It is of the fruit-bearing branch the Saviour spoke when He said, ‘Every branch in Me that beareth *fruit*, He purgeth it that it may bring forth *more fruit*;’ then changing the form of the metaphor, He added, ‘I am the Vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth *much fruit*, for severed from Me ye can do nothing.’ It is evident then, that in the living branches of the living Vine, there are degrees of fruitfulness—fruit, more fruit, much fruit; and He concludes, ‘Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.’ In the Parable of the Sower, of the good ground some brought forth thirty-fold, some sixty, some an hundred; and St. Paul speaks of the abundant fruit brought forth by the Churches of Corinth and Philippi. Every living branch

produces some fruit, every spot in the good ground yields some grain, every Christian does some good in his generation; but we should earnestly desire that in our lives fruit may *abound* to the glory and praise of God, that we may plenteously bring forth good works: we know that some shall be saved, yet so as by fire, their works destroyed, a bare escape of their lives; while of others it is said, ‘they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them!’ What labours have we to rest from? what works can follow us into the land of the blessed, or linger here in the echoes of grateful memory?

In modern poetry we find two opposite views of charitable work.

‘For where the power of imparting good
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other Heaven.’

Shelley.

‘The Son of God in doing good
Was fain to look to Heaven and sigh;
And shall the heirs of sinful blood
Seek joy unmixed in charity?
God will not let love’s work impart
Full solace, lest it steal the heart;
Be thou content in tears to sow,
Blessing like Jesus in thy woe.’

Keble.

If the names of the authors were unknown, the sentiments would suffice to shew that the first spoke of a romantic dream, and the second of a noble Reality. ‘The luxury of doing good’ is

like all other self-gratifications, and palls on the appetite even before it meets the rougher termination of disappointment; but true work is done for love's sake; the love of Christ is both a constraining power for holy obedience, and also a living influence within the soul, filling the heart with His tender pity for all suffering—a feeling which necessarily finds its expression in deeds of mercy. The Christian works not for success or for reward, but for God and for men; he loves the work well, but the Master far better; and therefore he is ready to go on or to stop, to do or to suffer, to labour or to be still, at the Master's bidding:

‘The workers follow Thee in doing good;
The helpless think of Calvary and are still;’

and in either case the fruits of righteousness may be brought forth plenteously.

As we hear of abundant fruit, so we hear (2 St. Peter, i.) of an ‘abundant entrance into His everlasting kingdom,’ and in this prayer we connect the plenteous fruit-bearing with a plenteous reward. In the full and free salvation given to man in Christ Jesus, some of the blessings are spoken of as ‘rewards;’ rewards, freely given of God’s sovereign grace, but distributed ‘according to the deeds done in the body;’ just as a parent voluntarily rewards his child for doing what he has given it the power to do. We are distinctly told that whosoever shall give to drink to one of

these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward; that they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever; that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, the faithful pastor shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away; that ‘God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed to His Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and yet do minister.’ What these additional endowments can be where all are in ‘fullness of joy’ and all are ‘satisfied,’ we cannot conjecture; but it is evident that the natural result of all work, in which we bless others, must be added blessing to ourselves. It is not all joy now, but it will be hereafter; the wider are our sympathies, the wider is our field of pain here, and of joy there; the deeper are our affections, the deeper our sorrow now, the deeper our felicity then; the joy over one sinner that repenteth, multiplied by joy over all in whom we have taken interest; the visible results of prayers, offered on earth in weakness, answered there in glory; the bliss of seeing others holy and happy, and remembering that we led any of them to that blessed home; the welcome echoed from every voice that has had cause to thank us upon earth—these things will be indeed a plenteous reward; but above all will be the joy of communion with Him Whom we all love, but which communion must be in proportion to the capacity of the spirit, enlarged by exercise,

for receiving of His fullness—He, ‘Who is the supreme good of all, giving of Himself to all, according to their capacity for partaking of His blessedness.’

There must for ever and for ever be sources of holy rejoicing to Saint John and Saint Paul, unknown to those who shall enter, as it were, alone, who have none to whom they can say, ‘What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming ? for ye are our glory and joy ;’ none whom they can call ‘my joy and crown ;’ none to welcome them into everlasting habitations. We cannot too earnestly desire and pray and strive to increase our treasure in Heaven ; yet rather let us desire that God may be glorified in us, and the result will follow, according to His good pleasure ; the highest of all motives is, ‘Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear *much* fruit ;’ let us never be satisfied that we bear enough.

The Christian year begins with a prayer for grace to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light ; during its course we are led to pray severally for all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, and now at its close we beseech the Lord to make us plenteously to abound in good works ; and both the beginning and end have a direct reference to the event of His return in power and great glory, when ‘His servants shall serve Him, and His Name shall be

in their foreheads ;' when 'a King shall execute judgement and justice in the earth,' and when the Church shall be clothed in the spotless robe of the Redeemer's righteousness.

ST. ANDREW'S DAY,

(NOVEMBER 30TH.)

Almighty God, Who didst give such grace unto Thy holy Apostle Saint Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him without delay ; Grant unto us all, that we, being called by Thy holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil Thy holy commandments ; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PROBABLY, besides his being the first Apostle called, the commemoration of Saint Andrew is placed at the commencement of the Christian year to quicken us in its progress by the example of unquestioning faith and unhesitating obedience. It appears evident that in this case faith was not the result of a process of investigation or reasoning, of which the Galilean fisherman, busy in his calling, was scarcely capable ; nor do we see evidence presented to his understanding, on which such a process could work ; nor was it the effect of belief in testimony ; had it been so, the

testimony would have been recorded, as it was when he himself found his own brother Simon and said unto him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, write;’ but here it seems that the call of Jesus fell on his spirit like a spell; with that power, silent yet resistless, self-evident and needing no proofs, with which the sun morning by morning asserts its own presence; we see it, we feel it, and no subtlety of argument could persuade us that it is not there, or add to our conviction that it is; that power which we often see exercised in social life, when the certainty is irresistibly conveyed from man to man of truthfulness and honesty and goodness. It is a distinct though harmonious process by which reason brings her tribute to confirm, or to enable us to convey to others, what we are taught by a higher power, even the demonstration of the Spirit. When Andrew went to teach Simon, his appeal was not to the earnest conviction in his own breast, but to the reasonable evidence of fulfilled prophecy; *that is man's part in teaching; the inward light, which precludes all doubt, is God's.*

The great lesson of this beautiful prayer is found in the words ‘readily,’ ‘without delay,’ ‘forthwith.’ How often do we intend to obey, but do it with such doubtful will and lingering foot, that the opportunity is lost or the circumstance altered. The ‘I go, Sir, and went not,’ is a common character; and very frequently, in the

delusion of our self-love, the intention is mistaken for the act; we intend to do so many good things, that we begin to fancy we have done them, and should be surprised if the actual amount of our devotion in spirit and in action were placed side by side with what we fancy we feel and do, merely because we know we ought; just as we may talk of a scene so often that we forget whether we have assisted in it or know it only by hearsay; but there is no room for such self-deception, if we, being called by His holy Word, *forthwith* give ourselves up obediently to fulfil His holy commandments. The severest course of duty demands only a certain quantity of work at each hour; the bitterest suffering comes not like an overwhelming avalanche, but calls for patience as it falls drop by drop and minute by minute; our wisdom is to take up the cross or gird on the armour now, for this day, not thinking of the last or the next; the burden will increase while we stand measuring our strength, but is never too heavy when God lays it upon us, and bids us carry it. This *ready* obedience puts an end to the perplexity of apparently conflicting duties. Duties never can clash, unless by the neglect of one at its own time they become entangled; and the questions of casuistry, so wearing to the conscience, generally resolve themselves into some very small but distinct error or neglect at some moment past.

' Each hour is like an angel that with wings
 Comes from and goes to Heaven ; yet empty ne'er
 Comes or returns, but some occasion brings,
 And hastens back to Heaven, the tale to bear
 Of evil, or fresh store to treasure there.'¹

If we stand contemplating the difficult hill to be mounted or the thorny path to be traversed in all its height and length, our hearts will fail ; but the whole journey is made up of single steps, and no step is beyond the given strength ; whatever then be the duty of this day, 'perform the doing of it, that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also of that which ye have.'² 'Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it : say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give ; when thou hast it by thee.'³

Nothing can be more dangerous than a high theory of duty and a low practice ; Bishop Butler wisely observes, 'Going over the theory of virtue in one's thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine pictures of it—this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to form a habit of it in him who thus employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and render it gradually more insensible.'

Lord ! grant unto us that we, being called by Thy holy Word, called in our baptism, called by Thy Providence, called by the inner voice within

¹ Baptistry.

² 2 Corinthians, viii.

³ Proverbs, iii. 27, 28.

our souls, may forthwith give up ourselves to fulfil Thy holy commandments: Grant us, as gifts of the Holy Spirit, an unquestioning faith and a ready obedience; and 'Grant us Thy Cross to crucify beginnings.'

ST. THOMAS'S DAY.

(DECEMBER 21st.)

Almighty and everliving God, Who for the more confirmation of the faith didst suffer Thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in Thy Son's Resurrection; Grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reprobred. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

BESIDES the more solemn festivals where they were wont to celebrate the mysteries of redemption, the primitive Christians set apart yearly certain days in commemoration of the blessed Apostles and Martyrs, who had attested their belief in these mysteries with their blood; a practice probably founded on the exhortation to 'remember those who have had the rule over you, and who have spoken unto you the Word of God.' In succeeding ages, to these were

added so many persons, holy or accounted to be so, that the commemoration became not only a burden on the Church, but also gave an invidious power of pronouncing on the character of the departed, and gave scope for flattery or false accusation ; therefore, as part of the Reformation, the Anglican Church cast off these additions, and retained only for separate remembrance such names as have their characters described and their deeds enrolled in Holy Scripture ; still giving one day annually to the loving commemoration of *all* who have departed this life in His faith and fear ; *all* His blessed saints with whom we are united in the mystical body of our Lord.

Among those of whom we keep an individual remembrance, St. Thomas is brought to mind next before Christmas, because the peculiar confirmation which his faith received and the tenderness with which it was strengthened, is an encouragement to all Christians engaged in contemplating the great mystery of the Incarnation—that mysterious fact upon which all else depends.

While in Christ's household each individual receives the discipline precisely suited to his own case, yet it is so overruled that no man liveth to himself, but as members of a body each one becomes in turn a recipient and a distributor ; the sufferings and the patience of Job were not for himself alone ; the taunts of Satan were answered in the sight of the angels, and the

whole family of mourners in all ages received example and comfort: and even the faults of His people (never concealed or glossed over in Holy Scripture) are made the means of warning and instruction to others; this we see in the case of Thomas. It is here noted in that filial acquiescence in what God does, which marks the character of the true Church; there is no questioning of a difficulty we cannot unravel, Why was his faith permitted to fail?—but a simple recognition of the good result of the fact that it was so; ‘for the more confirmation of the faith,’—both of his own and of that of succeeding generations. Surely in the long life of St. Thomas this confirmation of his faith must have been a perpetual memorial, not merely of the event of the Resurrection, but of the deep tenderness of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life; who, answering the thought of his heart eight days after it had been spoken, granted the evidence his weakness demanded; surely it was a noble preparation for his missionary work! When his heart failed at the ignorance and unbelief of the heathen, to whom he went, what a fountain of patience and long-suffering was opened to him, in the memory of this gentle rebuke! and if he was ever disposed to spiritual pride, contrasting his own personal knowledge of the Redeemer with the imperfect faith of those who learned from his testimony; how he must have been humbled by the words once spoken in

his own ear, ‘Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’ Nor was this interview ‘of private interpretation’ for him only; it is ‘written for our learning;’ to humble the pride of reason, and to comfort the downcast, by placing us on a level with those who enjoyed His personal presence. And it teaches us deeper lessons than this; had the favoured Twelve walked in the light with unclouded sight and unfaltering step, we might set them apart as objects of a semi-worship; their histories would speak no more to our hearts and consciences than the courses of the stars above our heads; and further, had they never denied the Lord, never feared, never questioned, never presumed, never doubted, there had been lacking the living evidence of that most wonderful truth, ‘It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you.’ This mysterious saying was explained when, by the effusion and infusion of the Holy Spirit, the weak were made strong, the faithless believing, the proud humble.

The prayer of this day is a fine protest against the readiness to doubt, and resign everything held sacred, which by many is cultivated, as a proof of candour and largeness of mind: ‘Grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reproved.’ St. Thomas’s was *honest doubt*; he did not draw back from what he

already knew, because a fact was presented to him which he could not then believe. When the Lord Jesus so tenderly met and answered that doubt, Thomas was with the other disciples, (who did not drive him from their company because of his unbelief,) the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, and Thomas was found exposed with the brethren to persecution, sharing their fate as followers of Him that was crucified, though he through want of belief in their testimony still remained under that fearful trial of their confidence in the Master which all endured in the interval between His death and Resurrection; and which wrung from two of them the desponding cry, ‘We trusted that it was He which should have redeemed Israel, and this is the third day.’ Thomas clung to his Master with a personal love that was stronger than his own fears, and unclouded by his own doubts; with the same feeling as dictated his determination to go up with Him to Bethany and to die with Him, (St. John, xi.) when the stronger faith of others enabled them to anticipate triumph over death, instead of martyrdom. The faith of Thomas was singularly deficient in the element of hope, but it taught him to be true to all he had embraced. Very different this, from the miserable scepticism which seeks for petty excuses for disbelief; from that cold inquiry which secretly wishes it may not prove true; very different from the bold infidelity that rejects all that is beyond the grasp of

reason ; very different from the indolence which refuses to investigate, from the levity which casts contempt on all that is sacred and sublime.

Pascal truly observes, ‘La volonté est une des principaux organes de la croyance ; non qu’elle forme la croyance ; mais parce que les choses paraissent vraies ou fausses, selon la face par ou on les regarde. . . . Je ne puis avoir que de la compassion pour ceux qui gemissent sincèrement dans le doute, qui le regardent comme le dernier des malheurs, et qui n’epargnant rien pour en sortir, font de cette recherche leur principale et leur plus sérieuse occupation. Mais pour ceux qui passent leur vie sans penser, à cette dernière fin de la vie ; je les considère d’une manière toute différente. Cette négligence en un affaire où il s’agit d’eux mêmes, de leur éternité, de leur tout, m’irrite plus qu’elle ne m’attendrit ; c’est un monstre pour moi.’ For such kind of careless doubt there is no encouragement in the assurance granted to St. Thomas ; but how full of comfort is the whole interview to those minds to which the speculative difficulties of Christianity form a probation, a trial, a temptation, as real as the moral requirements of Christianity form to others. He was true to what he knew ; his doubt was an honest doubt, honestly expressed, and his Master read it in his heart, and permitted the fullest satisfaction that reason and sense could desire, for this was a matter of fact which reason and sense were

competent to discern ; the question was not, ‘How can the dead be raised up?’ to which the answer is, ‘Thou fool,’ and an appeal to a visible process of which he is equally ignorant ; but the question was, ‘Has He risen?’ and the answer was, ‘Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side ; and be not faithless, but believing.’ And then what an honour is put on that simple faith in testimony in which St. Thomas failed, by the words, ‘Thomas ! because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed ; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed ;’ and this gentle rebuke was uttered even while Thomas bowed before Him, as his Lord and his God.

Nelson states, and Pearson refers to the statement as reliable, (though now, like almost every point of history, it is questioned,) that those who are called the Christians of St. Thomas in southern India were originally converted by the preaching of this Apostle ; that the Brahmins conspired against him to put him to death, and that one day when he had withdrawn from the city of Malapur for private devotion they assaulted him with darts and stones, and finally pierced him with a lance, and that his body was laid in and never removed from a place of worship which he had lately caused to be built in that city.

Before the Portuguese visited that part of India the Christians of St. Thomas numbered

fifteen thousand families ; they had no dependence on the Bishop of Rome ; had no images in their churches, but only the Cross ; they received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in both kinds, and did not use the ceremony of Extreme Unction.

THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL.

(JANUARY 25TH.)

O God, Who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world ; Grant, we beseech Thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness unto Thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE Collects for this day and for St. Peter's are in part retained from the early liturgies, having been in use since the fourth century, in nearly their present form ; but most of those for the Saints' days are of comparatively recent date, because it was found necessary to give up many which were found in use at the time of the Reformation ; they had been composed after erroneous doctrine concerning the intercession of saints had crept into the Church, and were rather prayers to the saints than commemorations of them. It is pleasant to go back as we do

this day to an earlier period, and to use the very form in which for so many centuries the Church has expressed her thankfulness to God for the Apostle to whom above all others we are indebted. When the books are opened and in the records of human life it is found what each one owes to another, St. Paul will probably be recognized as the greatest benefactor of his race. God raised him up to be so; God, through his preaching, caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world, even 'to the islands that lie in the ocean,' and 'to the utmost bounds of the west;' or as the historians Eusebius and Theodoret expressly state, to the British islands. Well may we join to thank God for this great gift to mankind; this man, as a chosen vessel, formed and fitted by Him for His own gracious purpose, and then sent forth to bless his fellow-creatures by turning them 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' But our thanksgiving must ever be mingled with petition; we are so poor and wretched, we cannot afford to forget our own necessities, and the cry of want must ever mingle with the song of praise; and truly we do need the same grace which was manifested to and in the great Apostle, to constrain us to profit by his example and his teaching; his life and doctrine alike are recorded in vain for us, unless it please God to reveal His Son in us also, and to shew us, by a light from heaven, Him who died for sinners—Jesus, the Saviour.

St. Paul's wonderful conversion ought to be had in remembrance, as a signal instance of the power of divine Love, turning in a moment the strong current of a life; as a proof that though the Lord generally uses human instrumentality, (and was now about to do so in the highest degree,) yet that His grace is wholly independent of it; and that though the work of conversion is usually gradual, as the growth of a plant, yet that He needs no time, but can at once accomplish the transformation of the proud Pharisee into the lowly Christian. His after history ought to be had in remembrance, to show us what a Christian man can be and can do; and how the grace of God can pour holy life into all the channels of natural character; not annihilating but sanctifying the idiosyncracy.

Our true thankfulness cannot be shewn in words; it must find expression in deeds as well, by following the doctrine which it was St. Paul's high privilege, under divine inspiration, to develope out of the facts of the Gospel record, and by following the track of his devoted life. While we thank God for sending St. Paul as a missionary to our heathen forefathers, let a missionary spirit be stirred within us for the heathen of our own day, who are lying in darkness as the British islands were then; and let us recollect that if it was a glorious thing for him to bear the message of peace to the far isles of the west, it cannot be right for us to sit in slothful

ease at home, indifferent to the efforts that are conveying the same message to the people now sitting in the shadow of death. This commemoration of the great missionary should each year lead to some practical result; to something more than the scanty contributions to missionary purposes which cost the givers nothing—no sacrifice, not even the smallest exercise of self-denial.

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

(FEBRUARY 2ND.)

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly beseech Thy Majesty, that, as Thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the Temple in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto Thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE Jewish Temple, whether in its literal or figurative aspect, is an object of intense interest. Its first erection was under the direct teaching of God, to replace that Tabernacle which ‘was made according to the pattern shewed to Moses in the mount;’ and for the building of the Temple, ‘the pattern of all things that he had by the Spirit,’ was communicated by King David to his

son Solomon. Doubtless every part of the structure had an emblematic significance, which gave it its value and importance; but the first obvious fact is that the Lord of Heaven and earth did thus employ the arts and manufactures, as He does the works of nature, in His own service, and to show forth His praise; the spiritual elevates but never annihilates the literal; we have, previous to any typical significance, to contemplate the Temple as a beautiful edifice, wrought by human genius instructed and informed by the Holy Spirit of God; in which the work of the architect, the carver, the lapidary, the weaver, the embroiderer, the manual labours of human industry, are recognized as things that can be done unto the Lord. And when in after times His disciples came to our blessed Saviour ‘for to shew Him the buildings of the Temple, saying, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here,’ we have no right to assume that He regarded their beauty only as figurative; He never said regard not their form, while He foretold their destruction; but He looked on them with complacency, as He looked at the lily and the grass, as fair things about to pass away; thus art, like nature, is blessed by His presence, and can be used for His service.

The noble edifice rose in silent majesty; all the stones were already prepared, ‘and the house when it was in building was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there

was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was in building ; — ‘and so was ended all the work that King Solomon made for the House of the Lord ; and Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated ; then was the Ark of the Covenant placed by the Priests in the Most Holy Place, and the singers, arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the Altar : and it came to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound in praising and thanking the Lord ; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever ; that then the house was filled with a cloud, so that the Priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God ;’ thus signifying that ‘the palace was not for man, but for the Lord God’— ‘exceeding magnifical.’

Years passed on, and in the days of good King Hezekiah, the injuries which time and negligence had inflicted on the Holy Temple were repaired as a national offering, and a national expression of penitence and faith ; once more the King and the people bowed themselves and worshipped, and the service of the House of the Lord was set in order ; ‘and Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people, for

the thing was not done suddenly ;' king and priesthood and people all shared the same enthusiasm, and worked with the same earnest and deliberate purpose of heart. Again with national sin the Holy Temple was defiled ; and again, in the time of Josiah, restored to its first perfection—‘the men did the work faithfully,—king, priests, warriors, and people, united.

But the sin of Israel called down punishment ; and the climax of the Divine judgment seemed to consist in the permitted destruction of this Temple, identified as it was with the religion, the unity, the independence, and the glory of the nation, the memorial of their faith, and the centre of their worship. ‘Thy holy places have they defiled ;’ that was the lowest depth of Israel’s disgrace and Israel’s woe in the time of her captivity.

Again, ‘God Himself stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and charged him to build Him an house in Jerusalem ; and he made a proclamation throughout his kingdom, saying, The Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the world ; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem ; who is there among you of all His people ? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is the God,) which is at Jerusalem ;’¹ and the chiefs of their houses arose, and the highest honour of

¹ Ezra, i.

their highest nobles and their wisest rulers, was to stand, holding in one hand a weapon of defence against their enemies, and with the other building up the sacred walls, (*'for the people had a mind to work,'*) and thus the Temple rose again in all its fair proportions; but oh what a contrast was this work, wrought by permission of a conqueror, and with watchful care guarded against surrounding enemies and false friends, to the magnificent circumstances—magnificent as the building itself—of the erection of the first Temple! ‘When the builders laid the foundation of this Temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, to praise the Lord; and they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house was laid. But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; while many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people.’¹ Then ‘came the word of the Lord by the Prophet Haggai, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes

¹ Ezra, iii.

in comparison of it as nothing ? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord ; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work : . . . for thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land ; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come ; and I will fill this house with glory. *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former,* saith the Lord of Hosts ; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.¹

And this august prophecy received its fulfilment when ‘The Lord, whom they sought, did suddenly come to His Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant ;’² not in visible power and might, but in that stage of helpless infancy, which above all proved the reality of His human nature, that He was ‘made of a woman, made under the law,’³ very man as well as very God. This promise, ‘I will fill this house with glory,’ was fulfilled when the meek and lowly maiden of Nazareth bore in her arms ‘the Holy Child Jesus, to present Him to the Lord, and to do for Him after the custom of the law.’ In that group, poor in external circumstances, there was a glory higher than all the royal splendour, or the sacred ritual, or even the manifestation of the Divine presence, had ever displayed, for Immanuel was there ; not God, as revealed through the Urim

¹ Haggai, ii.

² Malachi, iii.

³ Galatians, iv.

and Thummim, or in the cloud of glory shadowing the Mercy-seat, but God very present, God manifest in the flesh, in the truth of our humanity, ‘in substance of our flesh.’ We cannot too often record our acceptance of the Second Article of our Church’s teaching: ‘The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man’s nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance, so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided.’

Of this central truth of Revelation, the Temple was made a witness when the Virgin Mother brought her First-born to its Altar, offering for herself the customary sacrifice, in full acknowledgment that she herself needed, like other women, to seek pardon and cleansing from on high, even while He whom she carried in her bosom was the God, her Saviour, in whom her spirit did rejoice. And sweet as the glorious anthem that of old proclaimed that ‘The Lord is good,’ was the inspired hymn of the aged Simeon, ‘Lord, *now* lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.’

Old age was there, ready to depart, yet patiently waiting the call; and strong manhood, sustaining and protecting weakness and infancy;

and pure womanhood, full of maternal love and joy; all assembled round the infant Redeemer—was not the glory of that house greater than of the former?

Let us learn ‘lowness from His cradle.’ The poverty which caused Mary to offer the two young pigeons instead of the lamb, (*Leviticus*, xii. 8.) was a reality; and it is well to bear in mind that the poverty of our Lord’s life was not a picturesque representation of humility, but a true participation in that which is one of the real sufferings of mankind. The rich—that is, those who in any station have enough and to spare—talk lightly of this form of tribulation; but the poor—that is, those who have not enough for their own wants, and nothing to spare for the wants they long to relieve—know that it grinds down the spirit, and crushes the heart, and dries up the life-springs; therefore it was not in vain that He, who ‘would feel all, that He might pity all, made Himself to be acquainted with poverty as well as grief.’

The great fact of His humbling Himself to assume human nature at all, in one sense absorbs all minor distinctions; but as our Example, and as our reservoir of strength and compassion, we bless Him that for our sakes He became not only human, but poor; a poor infant without a cradle, whose mother could not offer the accustomed gift; a poor youth, sharing in manual labour,¹

¹ St. Mark, vi. 8.

instead of exerting His conscious powers ; a poor man, who had not where to lay His head ; who, when others went every man to his own home,¹ had no home but the Mount of Olives, no roof but the sky ; whose disciples were perplexed how to provide food for His followers, to whose personal wants women ministered of their substance. Poverty is a real pain, and *therefore* He took it as His portion. It is also the outward and visible sign of the Christian grace of humility ; although in our perverse nature, pride and poverty are often combined, yet it is the visible and natural expression of that humility for which the wisest heathen philosophers had not even a name ; Christianity was to teach the dignity of humility ; it alone ‘giveth grace to the humble,’ and therefore it became its Founder to appear in circumstances which even the world, who knew not whence He came, could see to be lowly.

And now the literal Temple, with all its beauty, has passed away, and we have instead a spiritual Temple, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone ; built up of living stones, cemented together by the Holy Spirit ; ‘ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ ;’ and here do we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacri-

¹ St. John, vii. 58 ; viii. 1.

fice unto Him ; humbly praying that as His Son was presented in the Temple in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto His Divine Majesty with pure and clean hands.

Nor can we live in this His spiritual Temple without looking onward to the yet more perfect fulfilment of the type which the Book of Revelation opens to us ; when the stones now in preparation, rough-hewn and broken and chiseled and polished, each one thus formed for its especial destiny, shall each be silently fitted into its own place in the Temple made without hands, eternal in the Heavens ; when His people, perfectly moulded by His power, shall become ‘an Habitation for God through the Spirit.’

SAINT MATTHIAS'S DAY.

(FEBRUARY 24TH.)

O Almighty God, Who into the place of the traitor Judas didst choose Thy faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the Twelve Apostles ; Grant that Thy Church, being always preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHRISTIANITY is a religion of facts ; it is not an ethical system, either spun in the brain of

man, or revealed as a theory by a supernatural communication ; but all its doctrines are a development of, or superstructure upon, certain events ; and the great office of the Apostles was to bear an honest and credible witness to matters of fact ; the Incarnation, the Ministry, the Miracles, the Death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, when the number of the Twelve was to be filled up, one must be chosen from among ‘the men who had companied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, to be a witness with them of the Resurrection.’¹ The election, after prayer to Him who knoweth the hearts of all men, was made by lot, and the lot fell upon Matthias ; (‘the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord ;’) and He, who is as truly the Head and Ruler of His Church now, as when He called the disciples together, and from among them ordained twelve to a peculiar office, did ‘shew which He had chosen.’ We ought to remember that this took place after our Lord’s Ascension ; that He then held to His Church exactly the same position that He does now ; that He now, as then, gives ear to the prayer of His people when they beseech Him, that His Church being always preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors. Wherefore is it then that the Ministry is not all that it

¹ Acts, i. 21.

was intended to be ? the answer is, ‘Ye have not, because ye ask not.’ We hear cruel mockings, bitter reproaches, against the rulers and pastors of Christ’s Church in this land ; do those who complain of them in this way ever pray for them ? We might venture to affirm, Undoubtedly not.

When a see is vacant, or any other place of high trust in the Church, there are political discussions as to the promotion, and sectarian discussions as to the candidates ; but where is prayer offered that the Head of the Church will rule the decision and shew whom He has chosen ? We cannot influence those who despise the Church and mock at God’s messengers ; but we may individually resolve to send up a cry to Heaven from our secret hearts, whenever we hear our clergy thus despised ; that where the accusation, of indolence or worldliness or whatever it be, is true, we will beseech the Lord to transform them by His mighty power into earnest and faithful pastors ; that where it is false, we will beseech Him to keep them from evil, and make them more earnest, more faithful. There is no obvious duty in which Christian people more frequently and *deliberately* fail than in the duty of praying for the ministers and stewards of God’s mysteries ; they complain of them, or idolize them, or despise them, or extol them ; exalt the man forgetting the office, or exalt the office in oblivion of the man ; but do they pray for them ? There is no class of men who so much

need, and so earnestly desire, to be borne before God in prayer. ‘Brethren, pray for us,’ is the fervent request, whether put into words or not, of every faithful pastor; ‘Brethren, pray for *us*, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified;’ ‘We have this treasure in earthen vessels;’ and if we would have the treasure preserved pure, we must guard the earthen vessel to which it is committed.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

(MARCH 25TH.)

We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IN the middle ages there were no less than seven festivals introduced in honour of the Blessed Virgin, dating at intervals from the eighth to the middle of the fifteenth century, to which some have been still more recently added; but the English Church, ever ‘seeking out the old paths,’ in her reformation rejected the observances at

that time modern, preserving only the two most ancient, *viz.* The Purification of the Blessed Virgin, 2nd February, and The Annunciation, 25th March. These two are founded on Gospel history, and contain a pure expression of reverence for her who was blessed beyond all other women; if, indeed, they may not rather be regarded as festivals of our Lord Himself; of His Presentation in the Temple, and of the angelic announcement that the Virgin born, of whom Isaiah prophesied, was indeed the Son of Mary. It is remarkable that it is in this view the two Collects chiefly regard the days, and not in reference to the blessed Mother, thus sharing on this subject the reticence of Holy Scripture. Most carefully do the writers of the New Testament, as foreseeing the error into which the Church would fall concerning her, guard against an idolatrous consideration of her who was truly the most favoured of the human race; and, as if in anticipation of this error, yet future, we are left in ignorance of her later years, while she lingered below, the sacred charge of St. John, after that He, who was none the less beloved as a Son because He was worshipped as God the Saviour, had passed into the Heavens, leaving her 'pierced heart' to watch and weep and hope. We first behold her, as on this day, meekly receiving the Annunciation; and last we see her as one of the band of worshippers, when 'they all continued with one accord in

prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His disciples.' (Acts, i.)

The idolatry, whether dogmatic or sentimental, which exalts this holy woman to a supernatural rank, deprives us of the most perfect model of feminine excellence. Ever occupying woman's true place of subjection, ever exhibiting the dignity of obedience, ever taking her rightful, that is an inferior position ; we see her as a maiden who shared the fallen fortunes of her royal house, sustaining *alone* the weight of glory which was poured upon her in this announcement. She was troubled, but she had no doubt that what God had spoken He would do ; and she bowed her meek head in submissive faith : 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to Thy word.' A true woman : she never stood in proud independence, but sought shelter in the home, and sympathy in the bosom, of her aged relative : and as it was the voice of Elizabeth that first hailed her as 'the Mother of my Lord,' it was in the shadow of an elder woman's tenderness that the joy of Mary found utterance in the triumphant song—'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' She humbly accepted the protection which God appointed to her in the care of Joseph, the 'just man ;' and was so entirely in subjection to his rule, that the commands were henceforth addressed through him : 'Take the young Child and His mother ;' and Joseph

took them; and instead of assuming the exclusive parental dignity, which truly belonged to her, she gave to him his official position, joining his name with her own in the tender reproach, ‘Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.’ As a friend, with woman’s quickness she discerned and sought to supply the domestic want at the marriage feast, withdrawing as soon as she had made it known, only leaving with the servants advice applicable to all the generations following, ‘Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.’ As a disciple, even more blessed than as the medium of His birth, she ‘heard the word of God and kept it;’ ‘she kept all His sayings in her heart.’ A silent and loving woman, she held communion with her own spirit thoughtfully, while others wondered; she kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart, ‘casting in her mind’ what all these marvels signified. As a mother, she guarded and cherished His infancy, flying by night to a strange land at the first intimation of danger to him; with wistful eyes she followed the steps of His boyhood, not constraining Him by her continual presence, but suffering Him to move ‘amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintance.’ She never obtruded on His public office, but ‘stood without desiring to speak with Him,’ as others did; she fulfilled a parent’s hardest task in permitting Him ‘to be subject unto them,’ and accepting His duty as a child, while profoundly conscious of His superiority; she never claimed His notice, or the notice of

others, for her sacred connection with Him ; she was a true mother—

‘A tree of life, whose glory is her branches,
Beneath whose shadow she, both root and stem,
Delights to dwell in meek obscurity,
That they may be the pleasure of beholders.’

She was unobserved when the admiring multitude cried aloud, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David !’ but in the hour of His anguish she was the nearest ; when all the disciples forsook Him and fled, there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother ; she took a woman’s and a mother’s place beside the dying ; and there she received into her pierced heart that most wondrous proof of filial love, when, in the hour that the destinies of mankind hung in the balance, and Heaven and hell lay open before His gaze, He thought upon her loneliness, and said unto His mother, ‘Woman, behold thy son !’ (that name which contained for her all love and confidence,) and to the disciple whom He loved best, ‘Behold thy mother !’ There is surely no human relationship so sanctified by the touch of Jesus as that between mother and son ! And what a benediction was here bestowed on the sanctities of home and the position of dependence ! She, His mother, for whom He could have claimed ‘all but adoring love’ from all His disciples, to whom He could have assigned any position of dignity or influence amongst them, He committed to the care of one, who took the mourner to his own home, and left

her to be a willing recipient, as John was a willing benefactor.

'It is not inconsiderable to observe that the holy Virgin came to this great perfection and state of piety by a few, and those modest and even exercises and external actions. She arrived to her perfection by the means of a quiet and silent piety—the internal actions of love, devotion, and contemplation ; and instructs us that not only those who have opportunity and powers of a magnificent religion, or a pompous charity, or a miraculous conversion of souls, or assiduous and effectual preachings, or exterior demonstrations of corporal mercy, shall have the greatest crowns ; but the silent affections, the splendours of an internal devotion, the unions of love, humility, and obedience ; the daily offices of prayer and praise sung to God ; the acts of faith and fear, of patience and meekness, of hope and reverence, repentance and charity ; and those graces which walk in a veil and silence, make great ascents to God, and as sure progress to favour and a crown as the more ostentatious and laborious exercises of a more solemn religion. No man needs to complain of want of power or opportunities for religious perfections ; a devout woman in her closet, praying with much zeal and affections for the conversion of souls, is in the same order to a shining like the stars in glory, as he who by excellent discourse puts it into a more forward disposition to be actually performed. Many times

God is present in the still voice and private retirements of a quiet religion, and the constant spiritualities of an ordinary life; when the loud and impetuous winds and the shining fires of more laborious and expensive actions are profitable for others only—like a tree of balsam distilling precious liquor for others, not for its own use.'¹

This beautiful portrait, this holy example, and this valuable lesson, are all contained in the Scripture records of the blessed Virgin; and all this which, belonging to the blessed *among* women, elevates and sanctifies woman's life, is lost to us where Mary is estranged from her true place, and put into that of a heathen goddess, partly human, partly divine.

The worship of the Virgin, like all creature worship, has its origin in false or inadequate views of the character of Jesus Christ, ‘in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead *bodily*;’ in whom there is a supply for every want and every aspiration of the human spirit, which He formed as Creator and knows as a brother. Regarding Him as the type of the nobler and sterner virtues, justice and truth, the heart may have sought in an ideal woman the softer affections—a thought which art has embodied for the Church of Rome, representing her as the complement, or supplement, of the Redeemer’s work and character! forgetting that in Jesus Christ as the new Head of mankind, is contained all that

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

we divide as the masculine and the feminine qualities of the human race, that a mother's love is chosen as the best reflection of His unwearied tenderness. (*Isaiah, xlix. 15; lxvi. 13.*)

But the Lord Jesus and the Virgin Mary are not to be regarded as representatives of qualities or abstractions of thought and feeling ; they are living persons : He is 'God manifest in the flesh ;' ever living at the right hand of the Majesty on High ; living, the essence of all life, as our Advocate with the Father. She is a woman, resting in holy peace, whose soul is in the Paradise of God, but whose body still lies in a forgotten grave, awaiting, with all others who sleep in Jesus, the Resurrection from the dead ; and to worship her is simply to worship a dead woman, however refined or sentimental the motive may be ; 'to worship the creature rather than the Creator.'

But there is an error *peculiar* to that idolatry of the blessed Mother, which raises her out of the range of our common humanity. The foundation truth of Christianity is that 'the Son, which is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin *of her substance.*'¹ 'Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham ;' 'forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.'² But as Mary is the

¹ Second Article.

² Hebrews, ii.

connecting link between His humanity and that of Abraham and David, her progenitors, so whatever tends to give her a superhuman rank, whatever tends to cut her off from the common stock of Abraham and David, tends to sever His humanity from ours, and *leads to a denial that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.* (1 St. John, iv. 3.)

May God pour His grace into our hearts as He did into hers, that we may receive in humble simplicity the revelation of Jesus Christ—that we may treasure His sayings in our hearts, that our lives may prolong the echo of her holy counsel, ‘Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it;’ and that by His Cross and Passion, we may with her and all His departed saints, be brought into the glory of His Resurrection.

SAINT MARK'S DAY.

(APRIL 25TH.)

O Almighty God, Who hast instructed Thy holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of Thy Evangelist, St. Mark; Give us grace, that, being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of Thy holy Gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WE are apt to forget, in our exaggerated appreciation of all that is local or personal, that

the great work of the Holy Spirit in and for Christ's Church, is the inspiration of sure and certain records, which preserve the revelation of God in its integrity, whether men believe it or not; that the promises of the Spirit to guide into all truth, to bring to remembrance what the Lord Jesus had done and spoken, to make His disciples know afterwards what they did not understand in His personal teaching, have their chief fulfilment in the writings of the New Testament; in the gift to the Apostles and Evangelists of the power to write under His direct influence, and the gift to the whole Church of what has so been written. It is true that without His Divine teaching we do not value this revelation, that we individually require to have our understandings opened that we may understand the Scriptures, that the light shines in vain for the sightless; but it is the same gracious Giver who bestows the light of day, and the eye by which we behold and rejoice in it; vain were the organ of sight, if we had only darkness or chaos to gaze upon; vain were the understanding made susceptible of light, if there were no external revelation of God, on which it may dwell and expatiate. 'As the eye cannot see in darkness and is useless, so there is a capacity in the soul for light, but it is not itself light; it needs the everlasting light from outside itself.'

The choice of the Epistle is frequently, and on this day remarkably, an indication of the view

which the Church takes of the object of commemoration. ‘When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men ; and He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ ;’ and we now pray that, as He has instructed His holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of His Evangelist St. Mark, He will give us grace to profit thereby. Each of the four Evangelists contemplated from his own point of view the beautiful monolith of the Redeemer’s character, and thus we are given a more perfect representation than could be conveyed by a single portrait. St. Mark’s, written under the direction of St. Peter, is eminently active, practical, and, so to speak, external ; a statement of facts, a record of plain discourses, in which there is no room left for subtle and perplexing questions ; it comes like a fresh sea breeze to sweep away the filmy network of human theories ; ‘Give us grace’ to use this gift, this invigorating gift, ‘that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of Thy holy Gospel.’

These words graphically describe the present temptation of the Church, when everyone seems to have ‘his own view,’ ‘his own opinion ;’ when ‘I think’ takes the place of ‘I believe ;’ and the solid foundations of the whole fabric of Christianity

are discussed as matters on which, with equal safety to our own souls, and equal acceptance in God's sight, we may 'turn every one to his own way.'

It is true the Christian must always be in pursuit of truth, and can never sit down satisfied with his own attainments; but this, not because he doubts what he has already learned, but because every attainment in the knowledge of Divine things becomes a vantage ground from which to gain a wider survey: the Christian life is not a Penelope's web, as some now teach, learning to-day what he is ready to renounce to-morrow; neither is it the bed of Procrustes, to which spirits of every stature are to be stretched or crushed; but it is a tree of life, rooted and grounded in Christ, ever growing up unto Him in all things, ever taking deeper and wider root downwards, and bearing richer and fairer fruit upward.

'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;' no going back on that dial; and as in practice, so in faith, he will 'deeper and deeper plunge in light' by an increasing knowledge of Him who came into the world, and bequeathed to us the record of His love, 'that we should no more walk in darkness, but should have the light of life.'

Steadfastness is the Christian grace especially sought in this prayer, and there never was a time

when there was more need to pray for it; we must be content to bear the reproach of obstinacy and narrow-mindedness, from those who regard ‘those things that are most surely believed among us’ as subjects to be decided by each one’s opinion, open to the correction of everyone else’s opinion ; and in opposition to this reckless willingness to be ‘carried away with every blast of vain doctrine’ it is well to consider the words of the Apostle Paul, and the connection in which they stand; ‘Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ;’ and this command is linked by a *therefore* to the sublime declaration of the Resurrection of the body ; because it is so, because God giveth us the victory over death, *therefore* we are to be ‘steadfast, unmoveable.’

While the Conversion of St. Paul teaches us that the power of divine grace can act instantaneously and without human intervention, we see in St. Mark the example of one whose piety grew and expanded ‘in friendship’s smile and home’s caress ;’ and therefore his case resembles that of the thousands growing up in the Church, all whose associations are Christian. The son of that Mary in whose house many were gathered together to pray for the imprisoned Apostle ; the nephew of Barnabas, the Son of Consolation ; St. Mark had no sudden transition to make from a godless youth to a godly manhood ; he had been brought up in the nurture and

admonition of the Lord, and (so far as we know) without any miraculous call, or any marked turning point in his character, he went from the bosom of that praying household, to be a teacher and an Evangelist of those things which he had learned. He was the friend of St. Peter, ('I was in prison, and ye came unto me,') who speaks of him as 'Marcus my son ;' and St. Paul, though on one occasion disappointed in him, makes especial mention of him : 'Take Mark and bring him with thee unto me, for he is profitable to me for the ministry ;' and perhaps there is not one name which so often occurs in the Epistles as one known and loved, as that of 'Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas.' With the energy which formed a link between his character and that of St. Peter, and made him the fit amanuensis of the zealous Apostle, he appears ever ready to serve and follow both him and 'Paul the aged,' though his peculiar affection evidently clung to the gentle and loving brother of his mother, Mary.

We, like him, have grown up from childhood under Christian training ; we, like him, have a heritage of remembered prayers offered and answered ; may we, like him, be 'steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.'

SAINT PHILIP AND SAINT JAMES'S DAY.

(MAY 1st.)

O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life; Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that, following the steps of Thy holy Apostles, Saint Philip and Saint James, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life; through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

‘THIS is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent;’ not only does this knowledge lead to life, but it *is* life; spiritual life consists in this knowledge begun, as the life of glory consists in this knowledge perfected; ‘for now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.’

There are two kinds of knowledge; that which concerns itself with things, facts, names, dates, theories, circumstances, abstractions, and that which belongs to persons. St. John, in one verse, speaks of both; ‘Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments;’ we know, as a fact ascertained by inference, that we possess that other knowledge; that other knowledge which is an intuition of the whole being; that

other knowledge which needs no demonstration, and which cannot be conveyed by any amount of proof. We may be acquainted with the history, circumstances, and character, of a man we have never seen ; we may be able to describe his features and his habits from the portraiture of others, and from our own investigation of various records concerning him ; we know *all about him*, yet we do not know himself. On the other side, the infant who cannot lisp his father's name, and is ignorant of all his external history, knows him in the deeper and truer sense, when it thrills and quivers with joy at his voice or smile, and refuses to be attracted from him by the glittering toy in a stranger's hand ; and this kind of knowledge, this heart knowledge, however dim and uncertain in its dawn, is tending to perfection, and has no limit short of a full sympathy with him who is its object. ' When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice ; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.' Who can describe, so as to explain to another, what it is to 'know a voice ?' yet it is a real perception, one of the first to which infancy awakens, and one of the last which lingers with the dying. ' I know My sheep, and am known of Mine ; ' known, trusted, as a man knows and trusts his friend, with a knowledge and a confidence ever widening and strengthening by the accumulations of expe-

rience. This knowledge is no vision of the imagination, although it cannot be defined in words; it is a spiritual consciousness by which we recognize the being of another in the same way as we recognize our own identity; we know what it is in the crush of human society sometimes to feel that a mind has touched ours; and thus in the press and throng of the multitude, one may so draw nigh to Jesus, so touch the hem of His garment, that healing virtue goes forth from Him, and the spirit bows before Him as the Healer, the Saviour. ‘Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace.’

How then are we truly to know God? St. Philip asked the question in his request, ‘Lord, shew us the Father;’ and the answer was given in the gentle reproach, ‘Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father;’ for Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to man, in Whom alone we read the divine Mind and meet the divine Will; ‘no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.’ ‘Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might; neither let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me that I am the Lord which exercise loving-

kindness, righteousness, and judgement, in the earth ; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.'

To know that we know, to feel that we love, to believe that we have faith, is a reflex and secondary movement of the mind ; and one which comes within the scope of our perception, and is capable of evidence and proof. '*We know Him*' ; that is something we cannot define ; but to ascertain whether we do possess this unspeakable and ineffable knowledge is easy, and the evidence palpable and tangible ; for 'hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments ;' 'if ye love Me, keep My commandments ;' 'he that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar ;' 'he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Love.' There are the plain evidences.

'Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life :' Jesus Christ the Way wherein we walk, for He saith, 'No man cometh to the Father but by Me ;' Jesus Christ, the essential Truth, manifest to the world ; Jesus Christ the Life, for in Him only is Life ; and our life is in Him, as the stream is in the fountain ; not a life cut off and given us as our own, but a life continuously communicated from Him and received by us, through the various channels of His appointment : so that, in that Way we must 'steadfastly walk,' nor suppose that because we have once entered by Him as the Door, we

have a separate and independent access to the Father.

He is Himself ‘the new and living Way which He hath opened to us by His blood ;’ and in that Way alone can we attain the everlasting life, which will consist in a perfect knowledge and a perfect love.

SAINT BARNABAS THE APOSTLE.

(JUNE 11TH.)

O Lord God Almighty, who didst endue Thy holy Apostle Barnabas with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost ; Leave us not, we beseech Thee, destitute of Thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them alway to Thy honour and glory ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THESE ‘singular gifts of the Holy Ghost’ were not those of miraculous power, which many others exhibited more largely ; but they were a peculiar measure of those gifts of holy love, one in spirit and essence, but manifold and multiform in action, which are in all ages and in all individuals the mark of discipleship. ‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.’

The character of St. Barnabas is briefly described as a ‘good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.’ There was a common

Jewish adage—‘The unjust man saith, What is mine is mine, and what is thine is also mine ; the just man saith, What is mine is mine, and what is thine is thine ; but the *good* man saith, What is thine is thine, and what is mine is also thine ;’ and thus it was with this good man, whose whole recorded history is a continuous giving out of all that he had, and all that he was, for the sake of others. The first mention of his name is connected with the giving up of worldly wealth : ‘Having land, he sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles’ feet ;’ resigning even the gratification of disposing of it according to his own judgement or his own impulse ; so that when, eight years later, he went to minister relief to the brethren which dwelt in Judea, he went as the messenger of others, the bearer of the contributions made by the disciples, every man according to his several ability. This act was not compulsory ; ‘while it remained, was it not thine own ? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power ?’ and he might well have argued that none could know better than himself how to dispose of wealth for the glory of God, and for the good of men ; but what he did was a greater sacrifice, and he made it. It is not an easy thing thus to serve the poor in the true spirit of poverty, even where God’s appointment simply withholds the means, leaving us empty vessels through which the bounty of others may be poured ; but here we have the strengthening example of one,

who having possessed the power, voluntarily laid it down, and resigned all that could minister to that spirit of self-gratulation, which revels in the pleasures of active benevolence, and mingles with the desire to relieve distress. The outward form of his sacrifice is not the object of imitation ; circumstances have so changed, that to do exactly as St. Barnabas did, would, in most cases, be a shrinking from responsibility, by putting out of our hands by a single act that which God had entrusted to us for a life-long service ; yet the spirit of the sacrifice is capable of imitation even in a wealth more precious than lands or gold. Many a son and daughter of consolation, whose whole plan of existence is devotion to the good of others, is regarded as one to whom such a service happens to be a matter of taste, or a religious monomania ; while a solitary instance of benevolence in a child of pleasure is recorded with admiration ; like St. Barnabas, they by one sacrifice of self, full and entire, put themselves beyond the power of making the lesser offerings which more excite the emotion of gratitude. It is often found that occasional acts of kindness make more impression than an unvaried continuance of it ; the love that never fails is taken as a matter of course, while an unexpected favour surprises and gratifies ; this arises from the same fault in our nature which makes us insensible to God's constant mercies ; we are more ready to thank Him for restoration than preservation, the

very constancy of His gifts making us less ready to acknowledge them ; yet are they continued day by day and hour by hour ; and thus ought we to lay down our lives for the brethren none the less constantly because we feel that the kindness of an hour is often more prized than the sacrifice of a life.

A ‘singular gift’ of true love was that which made St. Barnabas, the gentle Levite, become the champion of one so recently a vehement and cruel persecutor of the Church. ‘When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples, but they were afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple ; but Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken unto him ;’ and doubtless, it was from him ‘they heard that he which persecuted us in time past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.’ That pure spirit of love, keen and subtile as light, penetrated through external doubts and difficulties, and rose up courageously, not only against the scorn of enemies, but against the suspicion of friends. In the unhappy divisions of the Church, it is not easy boldly to recognize and confess the right that is found in those of opposite sections, and to cherish the portion of truth maintained by each, without becoming a partisan of either ; (and the spirit of party is the very antipodes of Christian love;) but so did this good man ; he led them

to understand one another; he blamed not the cautious scruples of the brethren, neither did he doubt the entire change wrought by grace in him who ‘was before a persecutor and injurious; but he drew them together by ‘the cords of a man, the bands of love,’ and opened the way ‘for mutual love without alloy!'

Again, as though that loving spirit must ever be quickest to discern the truth, Barnabas was employed to inquire into the state of the Grecian converts who had turned to the Lord in Antioch; ‘Who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.’ They were not his proselytes, but he rejoiced over them as if they had been his own sons in the faith; nor did he seek even to be the only one to water the seed sown by others; for he immediately departed to seek Saul at Tarsus, and brought him to Antioch; ‘and it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people;’ and this congregation, which first bore the name of Christian, he never sought to identify with himself, but ministered to it as the assistant fellow labourer of him who, a short time before, he had himself introduced to the Apostles: his was the love that ‘seeketh not her own.’ It was not given to him to open the door of faith unto the Gentiles; but it was his to ‘declare what wonders and miracles had been wrought among them, and

to rehearse all that God had done ; his to bear witness to the grace of God manifested to and through other men ; his to draw together in godly union the two great branches of the early Church, shewing to Jew and Gentile that they are both one in Christ Jesus. His was the love that ‘ rejoiceth in the truth’ wherever it is found, not the love which depends on a full return, and exists only in reciprocity ; not the love and unlove of unregenerate nature, whose tenderest emotions often border on hatred, readiest to resent where it has lavished most ; but his was that love once and for ever, that undying and unwearying love which flows from the love of Christ ; this was his ‘ singular gift,’ for which we do well to pray ; nor was his the selfish cowardly affection, which, shrinking from the pain of giving pain, would encourage sin rather than rebuke it ; no, it was the gentle Barnabas who united his voice with the trumpet-tones of St. Paul, to reprove and to condemn evil wherever it was found ; it was he who ‘ shook off the dust from his feet’ against those who rejected his message, while to false teachers of Christianity ‘ he gave place—no not for an hour.’

This beautiful character is so fully developed in action in the history of the Apostles, that it stands before us as that of a familiar friend. Its marked features are an unselfish love, a willingness to take the lower place, never to be first ; contented that ‘ *none loves him best* ;’ a keen

be much religious excitement, but no true religious growth.

And this real and intense conviction of our own unworthiness is the best preparation for ‘speaking the truth in love;’ nothing is easier than ‘boldly to rebuke vice’ in a censorious spirit that glories in its own superiority; nothing more difficult than to rebuke it in the spirit of meekness, which alone makes the rebuke available. This duty is peculiarly difficult in the present day, when a general fashion of spurious charity throws a veil over the distinctions of right and wrong, and smoothes away all offending edges and angles in the line of demarcation: in order to ‘rebuke vice’ or wrong of any sort, we must be ready to be accounted censorious, self-righteous, and illiberal; in order to rebuke it aright, we must be ready to account ourselves fellow sinners with him we blame; we must have a deep consciousness of our own sin, a constant recollection of the common nature which we inherit from Adam, and of the common redemption which is given us in Christ; so that we may feel in the faults or even crimes of others the evil nature which is ours as well as theirs, and be humbled for it; and in their restoration feel that to them as well as to us belong the privileges of the Christian life. We have no right whatever to rebuke sin as a thing from which we are free, though it may never have broken out in us in the particular form we are condemning; we can only

rebuke it aright when we go down into the valley of humiliation, and confess the evil as if it were our own ; like Ezra, who, concerning a fault in which personally he had no share, yet recognizing the unity of the body, fell on his knees, and said, ‘ O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto Thee.’¹

To be ‘ valiant for the truth upon the earth ’² is not the exclusive prerogative of the prophet or the preacher ; it is the duty of everyone, in every station, to whom the knowledge of God’s truth is entrusted ; and more especially are we called, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to rally round that portion or phase of truth which from time to time becomes the object of attack, or of contempt, from the world.

¹ Ezra, ix. 6.

² Jeremiah, ix.

SAINT PETER'S DAY.

(JUNE 29TH.)

O Almighty God, Who by Thy Son Jesus Christ didst give to Thy Apostle Saint Peter many excellent gifts, and commandedst him earnestly to feed Thy flock; Make, we beseech Thee, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach Thy holy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE gracious charge given to St. Peter—‘Feed My sheep; Feed My lambs;’—was transmitted by him to all who are called to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. ‘Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away:’ and therefore a most suitable commemoration of his character consists in a prayer for all bishops and pastors.

The diligent preaching of God’s Holy Word is an ordinance as distinctly appointed as the Sacraments or prayer; and perhaps, one reason why it does not in the present day fulfil its great office, is that we do not sufficiently consider it in

this point of view. Each discourse ought to be regarded less as a thing belonging to the individual speaker and the individual hearer, than as a portion of that living testimony which God has ordained, to accompany the written Word. We sometimes hear even serious and earnest people say, in their impatience of a dull or empty sermon, that they would prefer the Service without the addition of preaching. This is partly a reaction from the opposite error of making the great object of church going to *hear* rather than to *worship*, of the revival of the truth, ‘praying’s the end of preaching;’ partly the result of having so many books pressed upon our attention; but chiefly it arises from not considering the verbal and oral teaching as God’s ordinance: men talk enough about ‘the foolishness of preaching,’ but they forget the rest of the verse—‘it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.’ The voice that you hear on any particular day may be a feeble or defective one—nay, it may ‘give an uncertain sound,’—but it is only a part of the great voice that bears throughout Christendom and to the heathen, a living testimony to God’s truth; and each ordained preacher is one of those to whom God has entrusted instruction for all who are by providential arrangement placed for the time under his teaching; to each one, his office and your position declare that ‘he has a message from God unto thee.’ If once we begin to regard the

preacher as God's messenger to us, whatever his personal deficiencies may be, and remember all that *may* hang upon one brief discourse, all that the preacher owes to God and to us his hearers, all that we owe to God and to him our teacher, we cannot listen with careless indifference: but if we lament, as many profess to do, that 'the pulpit does not keep pace with the march of intellect,'—'that our churches are lighted with dim oil while our streets blaze with gas,'—'that we hear in sermons nothing but what we already know or can learn from books,'—the remedy is prayer. God can fit pastor and people to each other; it may be by raising the tone of the one, it may be by humbling the intellectual pride and self-conceit of the other; it may be by teaching the one to speak to the heart, and the other to know that 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; but however it be, prayer will not return void; and we are permitted to bring our complaints before the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, however querulous and unreasonable they may be; because He can interpret the murmur and correct the fault of teacher and learner, by putting each in his proper position.

'The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts,'¹ and 'he that despiseth, despiseth not man but God,' whose servant he is. The obedience of the

¹ Malachi, ii. 7.

people works out the pastor's crown of glory ; ' for what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ ? for ye are our glory and joy ; ' let us pray then that while God touches his lips, and fills him with knowledge, the people may obediently hear the word at his mouth ; and let us hear the voice of our pastors, pleading with us by all their labours and all their care for their people, ' Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.'¹

SAINT JAMES THE APOSTLE.

(JULY 25TH.)

Grant, O merciful God, that as Thine holy Apostle Saint James, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay was obedient unto the calling of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed Him ; so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow Thy holy commandments ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It is remarkable what a practical character the Church gives to all the commemorations of her departed saints. While year by year she lays the garland of undying love upon their graves, she gathers from them leaves of healing for those

¹ 2 St. John, 8.

that are alive and remain ; holy lessons, by precept and example,

'Spring like unbidden violets from the sod ;'

and in the circle of her annual remembrance we find incitements to almost the whole round of Christian duty. The ready obedience of St. Andrew ; the victory over doubt and despondency of St. Thomas ; the missionary zeal of St. Paul ; the power of prayer in the ordering of God's household, taught by the appointment of St. Matthias ; steadfastness in the faith from St. Mark ; a steadfast walk in the narrow way, from St. Philip ; holy intensity of love, and purity of sympathy, from St. Barnabas ; boldness, truth, and honesty, from St. John Baptist ; due honour for our pastors, from the pastoral trust given to St. Peter ; simplicity in receiving the word, from St. Bartholomew ; forsaking of this world's gain, from St. Matthew ; these are some of the teachings of the Christian year ; and now, in reference to the case of St. James, we are invited to lay before God in prayer the plainest duty, and yet the duty most difficult of application, of practical Christianity : the forsaking of all for Christ's sake.

There is a peculiar radiance cast around the life of 'that disciple whom Jesus loved,' giving to him an individual and personal glory, so that his brother James stands more as the representative of the events and characteristics which belonged to both the sons of Zebedee. They

both together, at the Master's call, left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and arose and followed Jesus; but this first step is not noticed in our commemoration of St. John, where our prayer is for that Light of which he was especially the Apostle; and now in this Collect St. James is referred to as if he had been then alone. St. James was the first of the Apostles to win the crown of martyrdom, to 'drink of that cup,' for which unwittingly his mother, Salome, asked when she prayed that her two sons might sit beside their Lord in His Kingdom. Alas! when we ask for great things in that Kingdom, and truly desire to share a glory that is not of this world, how little we estimate the previous discipline—

'The first in shame and agony,
The lowest in the meanest task.'

Of these two beloved sons, one died in the bloom of manhood, his grand career of usefulness cut short by the sword of persecution, while the other endured the vicissitudes of a life-long martyrdom, and entered not into his rest until he had borne the burden of a solitary old age: one in faith and in love, one in many instances of peculiar personal favour from their Lord, the brothers were separated in their after history, and were types of the various ways in which those who are witnesses for Him may be given to suffer for His Name's sake.

There is great wisdom in the form of this prayer; we do not pray that we may do exactly as he did, that a similar sacrifice may be required of us; but we pray that with the same unhesitating obedience as led St. James to leave his father and all that he had, we may forsake all carnal and worldly affections. The call which the sons of Zebedee obeyed was unmistakeable; there could be no doubt that they were desired at that moment to leave their father with the hired servants in the boat, and to follow Jesus along the shore of the lake; but this action, which was a distinct act of personal and *bodily* obedience, is often applied in a way half figurative, half literal, that perverts its true meaning. The call to us to any particular service is not personal or audible, and there is danger of mistaking our own inclination, which sometimes tends to a self-sacrifice, or our own imagination, which is always ready to magnify our own peculiar position for the Divine Voice; so that our safety is found not in following a new or personal revelation or impression, but 'God's holy commandments' as written by Inspiration; these commandments cannot contradict one another; there can be no real contradiction between the commands, 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' and 'Come, follow Me.' It is a subtle snare, yet very common, to call one class of duties by the name of the Lord's service, as though the whole circle of Christian duty were not His; as though there could be a

lawful service which is lower than the service of Christ : He recognizes no middle course ; the whole circle of life is His ; and in every relationship we either serve the Lord Christ, or the world and the flesh ; there is no one thing which may not be an act of pure service if it be done ‘as unto the Lord ;’ if it be not, as it were, done apart from Him, taken out of His control. In His household there are various offices, some more, some less honourable ; but whatever He gives us to do is to be done as a religious service ; Christ can be served none otherwise than in the way of His own appointment, by the rule of the written Word transcribed into the arrangements of His Providence ; and we must never overstep the line by which our path is hedged in, in pursuit of what seems to us a higher or nobler field of labour ; thus, we are in His sight hypocrites, inscribing *corban* on that which of right belongs to another, if we neglect the care of one aged sufferer, who is by His appointment our own especial charge, to minister to a thousand to whom He has not thus bound us ; if we neglect the moral training of one child entrusted to our care, in order to instruct hundreds, more hopeful or more hopeless, as our taste may select.

It is written in indelible characters, ‘He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me ;’ but stern was the rebuke uttered by the same lips to the self-willed, self-invented devotion of those who said

to father or mother, ‘It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me ;’ and withering was His condemnation of those who thus made the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions. Ye hypocrites ! Hypocrites we are when we pretend to offer as our own, to any line of service, that which He has already claimed for another, whether it be money, time, influence, or labour. The spirit of our work rather than the sphere of our work requires to be changed to transform it into an offering to Christ ; to work faithfully is to worship, to pray aright is true work. The Christian spirit (not merely a spirit of amiability) pervading common life and permeating the daily feelings and sentiments, is as really a service as the nobler walk of His ambassadors ; the great distinction is between Christ’s work and the works of the flesh, between the service of God and the service of the world, and not between different portions of Christian duty, all of which is of His appointment, and done unto Him, whatever its sphere may be.

It is a serious question for any individual where and when he may be called of God to forsake human ties, or break human associations ; but there is no question about ‘forsaking all carnal and worldly desires ;’ *that* we must do if we would follow Christ ; *that* will we do with full purpose of heart if we have tasted the love of Christ ; there is no compromise, no half service ; it is all or none ; ‘ye cannot serve God and Mammon ;’

'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts ;' the whole being must be given to Him to use according to His good pleasure.

The call to break through the tenderest bonds of natural affection is sometimes given ; and even in the present day there are those who have endured a sacrifice like that of the blessed martyr Vivia Perpetua, whose bodily suffering was as nothing compared to the anguish with which she resisted the pleadings of a beloved father, that for the sake of his grey hairs she would spare herself, deny Christ, and live ; there are crucifixions of the tenderest affections, known perhaps to God alone, which His service absolutely demands ; and we have often to confess that an unholy idolatry has been indulged under the sacred guise of love and duty ; that even the domestic affections may be a selfish passion, never fused in the pure flame of Divine love.

But while some few are tempted to overstep their boundaries, and a very few are tortured by longings to give more than they have, and to do more than they can, (a subtle form of pride and discontent,) and while with a very very few the question is how far they may lawfully separate themselves from the concerns and enjoyments of earth, how far they may deny themselves without hurting others ; the common difficulty is quite on the opposite side—the difficulty is to break the bonds of luxurious habit and self-indulgence,

which keep back men and women from the severer duties of the Christian vocation. Thus, if one daughter of a household devotes herself to works of charity, there is a murmur of discontent, as if she were neglecting home duties, though there would be no bewailing of a deserted hearth if she left it to marry in a distant land. How difficult it seems to give up a son to missionary labour, while there is no hesitation in sending him forth in any worldly profession; the parent who withholds him from a lucrative office or worldly distinction in any part of the globe is deemed selfish; but if the purpose be to go to heathen lands to tell that a Saviour is come, and to invite the sinner to turn to Him, then there is all pity for the bereaved parents, and a doubtful fear that the son is neglecting his true duties. The service of the world invites to gain and pleasure; and for this, more than at any former period of society, all the ties of kindred and home are broken; at the same moment God is sending forth a mighty call, Who is on the Lord's side? All the dark places of heathendom now open to missionary enterprise, all the ever-widening and deepening wants of our colonies; all the ignorance and misery and crime of our own population now laid open to every eye—echo 'the voice of the Lord, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Where is the answer, 'Here am I, send me!'

If there be a true abnegation of self; if we do 'forsake all worldly and carnal affections'; if we

simply desire to ‘follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth’—the path of duty will never be left uncertain; but we shall hear a word behind us saying, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left.’

Only let us be honest with God, true in our dedication of ourselves, our souls and bodies, as our reasonable service; and let us, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, disentangle ourselves from the affairs of this life, its vain-glory, its pomp, its attractions, that we may please Him who hath called us with an holy calling.

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE.

(AUGUST 24TH.)

O Almighty and Everlasting God, Who didst give to Thine Apostle Bartholomew grace truly to believe and to preach Thy Word; Grant, we beseech Thee, unto Thy Church, to love that Word which he believed, and both to preach and receive the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THERE is good reason to believe that Nathanael of Cana in Galilee is identical with Bartholomew; that Bartholomew may be an expletive title, affixed to his proper name, signifying the son of

Tholmai, as to Simon son of Jonas was added the title Barjona, and to the blind man that of Bartimeus.

Bartholomew is reckoned among the Apostles by St. Matthew, (x. 3.) by St. Mark, (iii. 18.) and by St. Luke, (vi. 14, and Acts, i. 13,) while St. John never mentions the name, but records much about Nathanael, concerning whom the other Evangelists are silent. The names of Philip and Bartholomew are joined in the three earlier Gospels, while St. John links that of Philip with Nathanael, whom he numbers with the Apostles, though not expressly stating that he was one; (St. John, xxi. 2.) and the vocation of Bartholomew is not recorded at all, unless it be under the name of Nathanael. (St. John, i. 45.)

St. Bartholomew the Apostle preached on the borders of the Caspian, and afterwards in India, where he sealed his witness for a crucified Master by a death of torture; the skin being torn from the living flesh. About the year 180 Pantænus of Alexandria went as a missionary to the same locality, and found in the hands of the natives a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which had been given to them by the Apostle.

These after events derive a double interest from the identity with Nathanael, for of Bartholomew personally we otherwise know nothing in the sacred story; whereas there cannot be a more beautiful instance of the uplifting and transform-

ing power of Christianity than the progress of Nathanael from his learned leisure under the fig tree through such a mission to such a martyrdom.

This Collect, referring to the love of God's holy Word, receives its fit application if Saint Bartholomew be, as we believe, that 'Israelite indeed in whom was no guile ;' to whose familiarity with the sacred writings his friend Philip confidently appealed : 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph ;' to whom, because he believed, the Lord Jesus revealed the meaning of Jacob's vision, which had been hidden in mystery among the descendants of the Patriarch. The blessing to the pure in heart has its commencement even now, although we wait its consummation until we shall 'see Him as He is,' and become transformed into His likeness by the power of that heavenly vision. Purity of heart, a guileless spirit, a child-like absence of self-consciousness, form a preparation for receiving Divine knowledge ; it makes 'an eternal clarity' in the understanding. Our perplexities concerning revealed truth arise not from any dimness or uncertainty in the revelation, but from the distortion or imperfection of our sight. If we would receive God's Holy Word in the love of it, we must approach it in humility ; we must be content with the limit of information as well as grateful for its extent. We must not study it with a vain supposition that we are capable of grasping

all its contents, or imagine that a difficulty is insoluble because we cannot solve it; but we must reverently search the Scriptures with the expectation of meeting much that we do not understand—yes, and of never seeing them explained, because the time is not come; just as Nathanael held, as his fathers had done, the facts of that wondrous vision in reverent remembrance, while its meaning was not revealed until his faith had been proved.

‘When Nathanael was come to Jesus, He saw his heart, and gave him testimony to be truly honest; and Nathanael being overjoyed that he had found the Messias, believing out of love, and loving by reason of his joy, and no suspicion, took that for proof and verification of His person which was very insufficient to confirm a doubt or ratify a probability; but so we believe a story that we love, taking probabilities for demonstration. In these cases, our guides are not our knowing faculties but our affections; and if they be holy, God guides them into the right persuasions, as He does little birds to make rare nests, though they understand not the mystery of the operation, nor the design and purpose of the action.’¹

If a man opens the Bible to see how far it squares with his own opinions, ‘curious to see what is said rather than to see what is true,’ if he uses it as an arsenal, from whence to draw

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

weapons offensive and defensive—its due proportions cannot be estimated, and therefore it is misunderstood and perverted.

‘How often in turning to it to clear up some historical sequence or some obscure doctrine, to find material for imagination or ground for hypothesis, I only get at the shell instead of the kernel; or again if in high wrought times a clearer insight be afforded, how prone we are to seek to improve and defend it by our own strength, and so to bring human fiction instead of Divine truth to light. The mysteries of Holy Scripture are only revealed to us when we are seeking for nothing else but reconciliation with God, and help in our battle with selfishness and sin.’¹

Nor can God’s Holy Word be appreciated by a mind filled with the objects of time and sense, where the imagination revels in the things that have their home, their beginning, and their ending, in this present evil world; ‘the full soul loatheth the honeycomb,’ and this ‘fullness’ may exist where its character is religious rather than worldly. ‘The sincere milk of the Word’ sometimes becomes distasteful, because the mind is pre-occupied by human theories and human speculations about religion, by ‘unhealthy inquiries and interminable disputes’ even upon sacred subjects.

Again, as Bishop Butler well observes, ‘Men

¹ Perthes.

imprints a character of awful dignity on the volume we hold in our hands often so carelessly, often with a presumptuous confidence that to us it is all familiar; that volume, which contains all that at sundry times and in divers manners God hath spoken to our fathers by the prophets; all that which 'at the first began to be spoken by the Lord,' and was afterwards confirmed by them that heard Him; all that the Apostles were enabled by the Holy Spirit's inspiration to write for our learning; all those 'lively oracles' which it was the chief privilege of the Jew to guard; all that the Christian Church holds as necessary to salvation, 'so that whatsoever is not read therein or may be proved thereby is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith.'

Nothing is more wonderful than that we, who know and are ready to do battle for its worth, should in truth value it so little; we have great need to beseech Him to 'grant us to love His Holy Word.'

'The childlike faith that asks not sight,
Waits not for wonder or for sign,
Believes because it loves aright,
Shall see things greater, things divine.'

SAINT MATTHEW THE APOSTLE.

(SEPTEMBER 21ST.)

O Almighty God, Who by Thy blessed Son didst call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle and Evangelist; Grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same Thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

'**THOU** shalt not covet,' is the precept which in the Decalogue links the inward thought with the outward act of sin; it anticipates the teaching of our Lord, shewing that not only the open act but the thought of evil is guilt in His eyes; for the Eighth Commandment speaks only of the sin of the Tenth developed into crime.

Covetousness includes the whole of the desire to appropriate more than our allotted portion, and may be exercised on any form of selfishness. We may covet fame, power, praise, even affection, in a sinful manner or degree; but the covetousness from which we here pray for deliverance, is the love of riches, the clinging to that wealth which St. Matthew forsook at the Master's call. Every advance in civilization and refinement multiplies the temptations to the love of money; every additional want, real or imaginary, every

may indulge a ludicrous turn so far as to lose all sense of conduct and prudence in worldly affairs, and in general, levity, carelessness, passion, and prejudice, do hinder us from being rightly informed even of common things.' Of this evil there is a peculiar danger now, when an unholy familiarity with the letter of Scripture combined with the prevalent tendency of popular literature to lower and seek sport in every subject, and to find the ridiculous in the very heart of sorrow, continually leads to the temptation to think and speak lightly of sacred words and sacred allusions.

Pride of intellect, self-fulness, and levity, are the great hindrances to the love of God's Holy Word; but 'all wants are but parts of one great want, the want of love to God;' if we love Him we love His Word, and if we love Him not there is no true understanding of it, because it consists not merely in statements of facts and of doctrines deduced from facts; it is the expression and utterance of the Divine mind, which can never be read aright except by the loving heart. We may love what we do not understand, but we cannot fully understand what we do not love; love alone penetrates beneath the surface; love alone discerns that which underlies the signs of language and the outward form of things. Holy Scripture is to us like the face of a friend; it is not enough that we discern the features, we love to read its expression; and there are times when the soul within smiles on us and speaks to us

through that which at other times is but silent outline. This observation applies especially to the Gospel history, with its '*incommunicable pre-eminency*'.

The Bible, as we have received it from our mother Church, as a whole composed of many parts, yet all having an integral unity, is the great treasure of every individual Christian; not that we should expect that in every chapter we read there is to be something personal, some startling appeal to each one's idiosyncracy; for it is a world-wide gift from God; like the sun and the rain bringing His harvest to perfection, and *therefore* not at every moment suiting every particular field; or like a wide pasture filled with various herbs for nourishment and for healing, and *therefore* not all of similar application in all cases. We must not receive even God's Book in a spirit of selfishness, but remember always that we are members, and insignificant members, of a great body.

The highest honour that ever was or ever could be put upon the written Word is found in the use our blessed Lord made of it in His intercourse with His disciples, and especially when, after His Resurrection, after He had overcome death, He gave them, instead of any new revelation, an explanation of the Scriptures, 'opening their understandings that they might understand' that Book which is given to us as it was to them; 'He opened to them the Scriptures.' This fact

capable of using it aright : but to covet power or influence from a high opinion of our own fitness for its exercise, shews great ignorance and great presumption. ‘ What a wonderful incongruity it is for a man to see the doubtfulness in which things are involved, and yet be impatient ‘ *out of action, or vehement in it.*’¹

Wealth maketh many friends, such as they are ; if tolerably well employed, it throws many attractions around its possessor ; attractions multiplied by the ever-increasing and developing worship of the things which wealth produces ; and in this point of view it gratifies many kindly though superficial feelings.

A more subtle form of the love of money is where it is coveted for purposes of benevolence ; where we think or know that we would dispose of it better than those in whose hands it is placed ; or where we attribute to it a power beyond its real worth ; as, for instance, money to support the agents of any good service is sometimes considered of more importance than the character of the agents themselves. It is dangerous to speculate even on benevolent designs with a longing for money to put them in execution. ‘ The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord.’

It is unwise to speak contemptuously of the pleasures of wealth ; it cannot give happiness, but it may adorn happiness ; it cannot heal a

¹ Bishop Butler. (*Remains.*)

wounded heart, but it can alleviate many forms of mental as well as bodily suffering. What Scripture teaches concerning it is that it is a trust; and if any trust be faithfully exercised for our Master it becomes a source of enjoyment to its possessor as well as a source of benefit to others. But what Scripture condemns, and condemns too with withering scorn, is that false estimate which makes ‘the rich man’s wealth his strong tower, and as a high wall in his own conceit.’ Scripture warns us that ‘riches profit not in the day of wrath,’ that ‘a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses;’ and while our vocation is to set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth, while we are called to walk ‘as strangers and pilgrims,’ we are warned against the entanglements of worldly gain; and woe is pronounced on him who ‘ladeth himself with thick clay;’ ‘woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his house on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil.’ We shall pray to be delivered from ‘the inordinate love of riches,’ if we simply read these words of Jesus: ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! His disciples were astonished at His words, but Jesus answereth again and saith unto them, Children! how hard is it for them that *trust in riches* to enter into the Kingdom of God.’ The disciples were ‘astonished out of measure,’
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but probably St. Matthew did not share their astonishment, for he knew by experience what it was to possess and what it was to forsake worldly wealth for Christ's sake.

The 'trust in riches' is at least as frequent among the poor as the wealthy; those who experience the bitterness of poverty, and see only the externals of wealth, are most liable to attach an undue value to that which they have not proved, to trust in money rather than in God, 'to say to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence.' Our Lord places 'the cares of this life' before the 'deceitfulness of riches,' as that which chokes the good seed; the prayer of wisdom is, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me;' but if His Providence appoints to us either extreme, we may by His grace use it to His glory. Care does not necessarily come between the soul and God while He invites us to cast it upon Him who careth for us; and wealth does not necessarily bind the soul to earth, while He graciously accepts the free-will offerings of His people, and opens so many channels through which it may be presented to Him. 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come.'

The Christian can afford to be liberal of this world's goods, because he has something better, something enduring, stored up for himself; as Alexander freely distributed all the booty of his victory, and when asked what he reserved for himself, he answered 'Hope.' Hope is the Christian's treasury, and he can readily part with that which is uncertain and unsatisfying; he can 'take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, knowing in himself that he has in Heaven a better and an enduring substance.'

Let us not think of covetousness or the love of money only as a sordid vice to which we have no temptation, and from which we are by nature exempt; but let us remember the young man, so amiable that when Jesus saw him He loved him, who yet refused the call and shrunk from the test, and 'went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.' Those possessions probably included all of the beautiful, the graceful, the intellectual, the benevolent, the social, that wealth can purchase—and it *can* purchase much of all these—but they were so many bonds, whether chains of gold or silken threads, that held his soul to the world. Let us beware of any earthly possession, any habit of life, that makes it difficult to obey the Master's call to severer duty; which would make us cast a longing lingering look behind when the blessed call comes, 'Friend, come up higher;' or which now makes the thought of that call less welcome.

SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

(SEPTEMBER 29TH.)

O Everlasting God, Who hast ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order; Mercifully grant, that as Thy holy Angels alway do Thee service in Heaven, so by Thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ALTHOUGH the ministry of Angels does not, like the communion of saints, form an article of the Christian Creed, yet it is well to have the thoughts periodically directed to the consideration of a subject so pure and so elevated. It cannot be too often remembered that this subject occupied the mind of Richard Hooker on his dying bed; his friend, Dr. Saravia, ‘finding him deep in contemplation, inquired his present thoughts; to which he replied, that he was meditating the number and nature of Angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in Heaven; and oh that it might be so on earth!’ We can fancy this Collect to be the very breathing of his soul at that time; he who so peculiarly prized the appointed order of the Christian Church, and who therefore most keenly felt its dissensions, must indeed have rejoiced in the perfect order of the service in Heaven. We

cannot but be struck with the arrangement of the Temple service, and also with the fact that the record of it is ‘written for our learning ;’ and while it helps us to image forth the perfection of angelic and saintly worship in the courts above, it painfully contrasts with the divisions and disorders of the Church below.

The angelic service, so far as it is revealed to us, consists of praise and obedience, in both which the Church of the redeemed is permitted to unite ; for with Angels and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify His glorious Name, and with them we share the duty of ministering to the heirs of salvation ; and thus we are ‘come’ as fellow-worshippers, as fellow-servants, ‘to an innumerable company of Angels.’ The Christian ministers visibly, the Angel invisibly, but both in obedience to Him who is Lord both of Angels and men ; we see the human friend, who comes as His messenger to protect or console ; we see not the angelic being who comes on the same errand, to preserve perhaps from ills of which we are unconscious ; but the good offices of both are alike dependent on Him whom they obey. We believe that the air is full of these invisible friends, and that if our eyes were opened like those of Elisha’s servant, we should see ‘the Angels of the Lord encamping round about them that fear Him, and delivering them.’ During the whole course of early Scripture history we find their constant intervention in the affairs of men ;

and it cannot have ceased under the dispensation which is the blossom of that which preceded it, as the heavenly is the fruit of both ; if they ministered then, how much more must they minister now ! If those sinless creatures were ever ready to minister to the saints of the Old Testament, we cannot doubt that they minister to the members of Christ's body, though of the mode of that ministration we are very ignorant : if they were so honoured as to minister to our Lord Himself, can we fancy that we need not their kindly aid ? It is a wide subject, full of lively interest both for the imagination and the affections, but one at which we can only glance in connection with this prayer.

' God has ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order.' Oh, happy thought ! there are creatures in existence who have never sinned, have never erred or strayed from His ways ; who serve Him perfectly, who do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word ; there are creatures who never dishonour His holy Name, in whom He is for ever glorified ! it is a thought in which the spirit finds repose when wearied with the sin and sorrow and strife of earth.

' Nor think, though men were not,
That Heaven would want spectators, God want praise.
Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep ;
All these with ceaseless praise His works behold
Both day and night.'

SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST.

(OCTOBER 18TH.)

Almighty God, Who callest Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, to be an Evangelist, and Physician of the soul ; May it please Thee, that, by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed ; through the merits of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SIN—the heavy burden under which this world is groaning—is regarded in Holy Scripture under two aspects—as crime and as disease; and the remedy for both is found in the Incarnation.

‘Though guilt cannot be transferred, its punishment may be ;’ and we are assured that He who was without sin ‘bore our sins in His own body on the tree ;’ ‘Christ suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us unto God ;’ ‘He died for our sins ;’ ‘He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ;’ ‘the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all ;’ He is ‘the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world ;’ ‘the Lamb who was slain and has redeemed us to God by His blood.’

Language labours in vain to find terms more explicit and unmistakeable than those employed in Scripture to express the great truth of the

expiatory sacrifice completed on the Cross; by which, as the Church expresses it, He became ‘a Sacrifice not only for original guilt but also for the actual sins of men; the Lamb without spot, who by the sacrifice of Himself once made should take away the sins of the world.’¹

‘In the unknown agonies of our Lord’s passion, is seen the awful struggle of the Infinite Victim, when, making compensation for the offences of a world, He offered up that humanity of His own which He had rendered of infinite value by joining it in His own Person to the Infinite. We cannot go too far in detracting from the value of all other works spoken of as an offering to God independently of the perfect work of Christ our Saviour. It is not too much to say that, viewed as an independent sacrifice from man to God, all other works are unnecessary, for if they were necessary no flesh could be saved; for He is the sole Mediator between God and man; what He pleads is the sacrifice of His crucified humanity. He stands alone, the Elder Brother does all, His brethren do nothing; He bears the burden of all offences; He offers “Himself a ransom for all,” and this ransom is of infinite value.’²

And running parallel with this putting away the guilt of sin by the sacrifice of Himself, there is another truth; ‘He came to save His people *from* their sins,’ ‘to purify unto Himself a peculiar people,’ ‘to deliver us from this present evil

¹ Articles II. and XV.

² Wilberforce.

world ;' God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' The prisoner of Satan is not left with chains broken and an open door of escape, yet incapable of moving by reason of his own infirmity ; the Saviour gives health as well as liberty. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel : 'Behold, I bring unto you health and a cure ;' health by the infusion of His own purity, health by the indwelling of the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit who dwelt in Him 'without measure,' and is communicated to His people through the sole medium of a participation in His glorified humanity ; He having become Man, the life of God is brought back into the human family.

The first of these great truths is expressed in the language of type and figure by the law of sacrifice, declaring, from the accepted offering of Abel down through the whole details of the Levitical ritual, that 'without shedding of blood there is no remission :' the second (which is indissolubly twined with it) is expressed by the type of the brazen serpent, upon which everyone who looked was healed, and by all the miracles of bodily healing, which, while they were acts of tender mercy towards the sufferers, were also typical actions fitted to give utterance to the character of the Redeemer as the Physician of souls. Every instance of healing to the blind, the halt, the withered, the dumb, the deaf ; those

who ‘were at the point to die,’ and those who were already dead, was a type and a pledge of His will and power as the Lord and Giver of life to remove the disease of sin in its varied forms ; even to quicken those who were dead in trespasses and sins ; and lest any should say ‘There is not any case parallel to mine,’ it is added, ‘He healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.’ Yes ; ‘He forgiveth all our iniquities, He healeth all our diseases.’ Purification of heart and life is as essential a part of man’s salvation as the forgiveness of sins that are past ; both are alike found in Christ, and in Him alone.

As this prayer beautifully suggests, all that is needful for the soul’s health may be found in the record of the birth and life and death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, and in the developed action of these events shewn in the lives of the first Christians ; for these are ‘the wholesome medicine of the doctrine delivered by’ Saint Luke ; ‘medicine whereby all the diseases of our souls may be healed ;’ and their diseases are manifold—not only sin, but sorrow ; not only external calamity, but sorrow that dwells within, doubts, perplexities, fear, anxiety, which are the intimate companions of sin ; and sorrow too that would belong to the pilgrim all the more were he sinless, because he is far from home.

‘There is a deep melancholy in the heart of every man, bound up in the very bundle of his

life, which like the breath of myrrh is ever ready to spread itself by a secret influence over all his being; and in spirits of the deepest tone there is the most of this, for this is the greatness of the soul reaching after its true portion.'¹

For *all* the Gospel provides a remedy, and now as ever 'the power of the Lord is present to heal:' 'He healeth those that are broken in heart, and giveth medicine to heal their sickness.'

SAINT SIMON AND SAINT JUDE, APOSTLES.

(OCTOBER 28TH.)

O Almighty God, Who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head Corner-stone; Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PECULIAR truths are brought out by each of the various emblems under which the Church of Christ is described, and none is more striking and instructive than the common figure of a building; all depending upon the perfection of the foundation, and the adherence of the whole to it; the stones, each separate and brought from different

¹ Bishop of Oxford. Sermon on Psalm xxxvii. 7.

places, yet deriving their importance not from their several characters, or former place, but from the positions they now occupy ; all distinct, yet bound together and bound to their one foundation by a cement that is not a part of themselves ; the whole, not a self-development, not a thing that grows by inherent vitality, but planned and formed and builded by a superior intelligence.

The stones are taken from the quarry ; ‘Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged ;’—look at that common nature derived by descent from the first transgressor ;—and they are hewn into fitness for their appointed places ; severed from the mass, and subjected to the processes which form them for their several positions ; they are ‘built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets,’ for ‘other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,’ on whom, as the Rock of their salvation, the living stones are placed ; the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb being the first in order, so that succeeding generations rest upon them, as the layers of stone rest one upon another ; all forming together the great edifice which is not yet completed, but which is daily, by the addition of new ‘lively stones,’ growing up ‘into an holy Temple in the Lord ; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.’ The body with its many members and its one head, the tree with its many branches and its one root, the building with its many stones and

its one foundation, are fit emblems of the Church, composed of many parts, each of which holds a relation to all ; in which each occupies an appointed place, that he may neither intrude upon or fail those with whom he is united ; and of which the unity depends less on their relationship one to another than on their connection with the one point which belongs to all in common.

There is one aspect of the spiritual life, in which the Christian stands alone with God, as if there were no other being in existence ; as ‘no man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him,’ so is there in the drawing of the redeemed soul to the reconciled Father a secret and personal work with which no created spirit can interfere ; ‘each one knows his own grief and his own sore,’ as ‘Thou, Lord, only knowest the hearts of the children of men.’ And as ‘the heart knoweth its own bitterness,’ and can lay bare its wounds to no eye save the eye of God, so is there a joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not ; there is a deep and close communion between the soul and its Redeemer, of which the dearest human sympathy is but a faint and broken reflection.

This is one of the first principles of Christianity ; it deals with men personally, individually ; it severs the soul from all its surroundings, and causes it now to stand in its awful solitude before the Mercy-seat, even as in the judgement day ‘*every one of us shall give an account of himself*

to God, that *every one* may receive according to the things done in the body ;' none will be lost in the crowd, or pass in among the mass, on that day ; and now none can come to God for mercy, or receive His quickening grace, unless he come for himself, as a solitary individual, confessing his own sin, seeking pardon for his own soul. Each several believer is spoken of as a Temple of the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians, vi. 19.)

Nevertheless, it is dangerous to dwell exclusively, or beyond the due proportion, upon this personal view of our position, lest thereby we should feed our natural selfishness ; there is such a thing as religious selfishness ; sin isolates, grace unites.

The stones are hewn from the rock, and each one severally chiseled and polished, but it is that they may fill a place in one grand edifice ; every branch and leaf in the tree is instinct with one life, drawn from the root ; every member of the body has its several office and its separate sensation, but all form one body. 'There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.'

‘ ‘Tis the sublime of man,
Our noontide majesty, to know ourselves
Parts and proportions of one wondrous whole !
This fraternizes man, this constitutes
Our charities and bearings. But ‘tis God
Diffused through all that doth make all one whole.’

This is not the dream of a philanthropic visionary; it is realized in the constitution of the Church of Christ, and is acted out, in so far as we recognize our calling, not as separate atoms, but as members of a society. The Communion of Saints lies deeper than the love which Christian men bear one to another, or the enjoyment they find in converse or sympathy of feeling; that love which is the essential mark of discipleship has its origin in the profound reality of a common salvation, a common Saviour. ‘The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ? for we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.’ No human words must be added to that declaration, awful in its majestic simplicity.

In Church union personality is not lost; nay, far from being annihilated, individuality will be perfected in the state of bliss where unity also is perfect. The more each jewel is polished, the more it shines in its distinctive lustre, so that though in their rough state they may not be distinguishable, no polished gem can be mistaken for another; and thus when the dross of this evil world is removed, ‘in the day when He maketh up His jewels,’¹ each son of God will be manifested in his perfected identity; each jewel will emit its own peculiar radiance and sparkle in its own peculiar hue, while all are united to form the breast-plate of the Great High Priest; while all

¹ Malachi, iii. 17.

shall be one ‘crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God;’¹ ‘when He whose name is the Branch shall build the Temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the glory; and He shall sit and rule upon His Throne, and He shall be a Priest upon His Throne.’²

ALL SAINTS’ DAY.

(NOVEMBER 1ST.)

O Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE latest festival of the Christian Year is that which draws together ‘the whole family in heaven and earth;’ for the Communion of saints embraces not only ‘all those who in every place call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus, both theirs and ours,’ but also those who in all ages have put their trust in Him who is our Life; and in this festival we confess our faith in this doctrine, and turn the fact of this unity into a prayer that we may

¹ Isaiah, lxii. 3.² Zechariah, vi. 13.

profit by its sanctifying influence. The most cruel schism that rends His mystical Body is that which severs those members who are asleep in Jesus from those who are alive and remain; which consigns them to oblivion when they pass out of sight; or supposes them in a state of torpor, amounting to temporary annihilation, because their present state of existence is too pure, too refined, too bright, and too spiritual, for our dull perception. Against such a schism we this day protest, declaring our belief that 'God has knit together His elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical Body of His Son Christ our Lord.' And this unity is not broken by the length of the procession, one portion of which has entered into the Temple, while another is still walking towards the House of God, through a dry and barren land; and some are still but 'inquiring the way to Zion with their faces thitherward,' those who lie within the light of God, and those who are still in the vale of shadows, yet form one company. 'The mountain of the Lord's House' is one, though the summit is bathed in everlasting light while clouds and darkness linger round its base; and yet a little while and the shadows shall flee away, and eternal sunshine shall exhibit its varied unity. Our communion is perfect: for theirs and ours is one foundation, Jesus Christ and Him crucified; theirs and ours is one hope, Jesus Christ and Him glorified; they and we have been baptized with one baptism for the remission of sins;

they and we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that bread ;' they and we have all been quickened and then educated by the One Holy Spirit ; they and we are looking forward together for the great consummation, to the day when 'Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, and we also shall appear with Him in glory.'

Our united prayer is, 'How long, O Lord, how long ? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly !' Our thanksgiving and theirs is one : 'To Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.' We are here, 'waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God ;' they are there, waiting till the number of His elect be accomplished ; for they without us are not made perfect ; the Body will not attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ while the weakest and smallest member is wanting.

In the course of the Christian seasons we have commemorated one after another of His gathered saints, naming in His holy presence their names and characters, and asking Him to impart to us like grace, as He bestowed on them, making them faithful unto death ; but now we commemorate collectively all who have passed to Him within the veil ; we think to-day not only of the glorious company of the Apostles, but also of those, our own immediate ancestors and predecessors who are among 'the dead in Christ ;' not only of those saints 'whose praise is in the Churches,' but of

the Lord's hidden ones, who have passed silently from the earth, their light concealed by infirmity or seclusion. We make mention too of those who are the parents of our thoughts, whose winged words are our heritage ; all whose writings still instruct and comfort us, and whom we hope to recognize hereafter :

' Know them by look and voice, and thank them all
For helping us in thrall ;
For words of hope and bright examples given,
To shew through *moonless skies* that there was light in Heaven.'

We remember those benefactors for whose existence after generations give thanks ; the founders of our schools of learning and of our houses of mercy ; all those of whose labour of love we now reap the fruit ; and then, yet dearer and more precious as we touch the heart's inner circle, we think of those who have passed from our homes ; those who were the light of our domestic life ; those whose images are enshrined in the deepest recesses of our being ; those who have been gone away so long that their memory is like a sweet dream of infancy ; those whose departing has cut the thread of our life in twain ; those who have just left us, cleaving a chasm in our hearts as they went away ;—all these—from the noble army of martyrs down to the poor babe who died to-day—pass in vision before us while we 'bless His holy Name for all His servants departed this life in His faith and fear ;' all these we call to share in our rejoicing, when 'with

angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify His holy Name; yet more especially, more peculiarly, upon this day, annually devoted to the memory of the holy and happy dead.

The frivolity and worldliness of our habits, are the great hindrance to the recognition and enjoyment of this festival; some even seem to bury their dead out of their sight, and to try to fill up the bleeding void with some new object, with worldly business or change of scene; and sometimes this hardness of heart assumes the name of resignation or divine support! but where the heart is true and tender, where the bereavement, whatever be its extent, is truly felt, there will be a drawing to the unseen world; so that each loved one becomes a link in the chain that draws our affections upward, that binds us to the blessed hope of our Master's coming, when those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. The thought that the friend, the child, who lately was with us, having part in all our daily concerns, is now in the pure presence of the Lord, and in the midst of the unseen realities there, must have a good influence wherever it is calmly entertained.

In one sense we may well believe that the blessed dead are nearer to us than the friends still in the body who are severed from us by intervals of space; and as through the medium of writing we can send a thought or feeling to traverse the globe and speak from heart to heart,

so may we well believe that they who are out of the body may receive or communicate a thought or a feeling, though we know not how; that the sudden revivals of their remembrance, the tenderness that, we know not why, floods the heart towards them at one moment more than another, may be of a mutual influence. It is a question of profound interest, whether the messengers who minister to Christ's people are always of the angelic orders, or whether they may be departed saints, permitted to anticipate their resurrection form, as did those whose bodies appeared unto many at the time of the Crucifixion; or permitted for a time to assume that materialism of which we may well suppose a nucleus cleaves to the human spirit. In one case we are sure that a departed saint thus ministered, for he who instructed St. John said, 'I am of thy fellow-servants the prophets;' and there is a strong intimation that those whom we have served on earth will welcome us into the Heavenly habitations. (St. Luke, xvi. 9.)

Some minds shrink from the belief that the blessed take cognizance of what is passing on earth, because they would see so much to grieve their pure spirits and disturb their perfect rest; but this objection only contradicts the assumption that they are endowed with divine prescience; to say that those who are *there* still remember and still love, and that they are witnesses of our Christian race, is not to assert that all events and

all actions are known to them, still less to presume that they have such a knowledge of the secrets of the heart as belongs to God. Our Master, Christ, holds the key of knowledge in His own hand of wisdom and love, and can open or close its avenues to them as He does to us, at His good pleasure.

How blessed, how honourable, is the state of the dead in Christ! the conflict ended; their faith proved true to the end; their probation finished; their death over, so that ‘they cannot die any more;’ their future, one advance from glory to glory; surely the effect must be alike sanctifying and comforting, of dwelling much with them in thought; of sympathizing in their bliss, of rejoicing with them that do rejoice; and oh! may He give us grace so to follow those blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may in due time share their unspeakable joy.

‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord;’ and blessed too are those who remember and love them.

THE END.



